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The Kinaesthetics of Serial Television

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A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
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DECLARATION

This thesis is submitted in accordance with the regulations for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Film and Television Studies. I declare that the material contained within it is my own work and has not been submitted for a degree at another university.

Parts of Chapter Two were published as Zoë Shacklock, 'A Reader Lives a Thousand Lives Before He Dies: Transmedia Textuality and the Flows of Adaptation', in *Mastering the Game of Thrones: Essays on George R. R. Martin's A Song of Ice and Fire*, ed. by Susan Johnston and Jes Battis (Jefferson, N.C. McFarland, 2015), pp. 262-279.

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ABSTRACT

This thesis argues for the centrality of kinaesthesia to the narrative structures and modes of address of contemporary serial television drama. Scholarly and popular accounts of ‘quality’ television privilege audiovisual aesthetics, valuing these programmes for the ways they seemingly depart from established televisual form. In objection to this dominant scholarly narrative, this thesis explores how these programmes can be theorised through their shared use of a kinaesthetic reading strategy, in which the movement and spatial dynamics of the body are fundamental for the construction of narrative meaning, emotional impact, and political engagement.

The first chapter of this thesis considers what kinaesthesia has to offer our existing theories of televisual storytelling, aesthetics, and engagement, through a review of the critical literature. The following three chapters each focus on a different thematic element of the kinaesthetics of serial television drama. The second chapter discusses *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011–) and *Lost* (NBC, 2004–2010) as examples of the ‘vast narrative’: massive, sprawling stories often explicitly concerned with journeys and mobility, which appeal to kinaesthesia as a means of making their vast storyworlds coherent. The third chapter considers how television dramas both reiterate and resist the normative elements of kinaesthesia, focusing on the embodied politics of gender identity and desire in *Outlander* (Starz, 2014–) and *Transparent* (Amazon, 2014–). The final chapter questions how kinaesthesia functions as a mode of empathetic engagement with television, and the extent to which contemporary serial dramas such as *Hannibal* (NBC, 2013–2015) and *Sense8* (Netflix, 2015–2017) present it as a transformative mode of relating to other people.

The thesis is invested in presenting kinaesthesia as a productive method for the analysis of television, in which attention to the embodied dynamics of narrative and engagement has much to offer our understanding of screen media, the embodied politics of identity, and the evaluative frameworks of television scholarship. Television has always been a medium defined and experienced through metaphors of mobility, a property that persists in the ways in which serial dramas exploit the storytelling potential of the moving body. By offering kinaesthesia as framework for understanding how serial television speaks to its audience, this thesis proposes a method that is attuned to both the storytelling strategies of these highly contemporary texts, and to the broader theoretical and evaluative history of the medium itself.

INTRODUCTION

In a crowded high school cafeteria, five people perform a sequence of movements. They forcefully project their arms in front of their bodies, wrists held together, fingers open and waving (Figure 1.1). They gracefully and slowly glide their right arms into the air, then snap them to their left shoulders to clasp their other hand, pivoting to the right with their hands in front of their face (Figures 1.2-1.4). Fingers clenched as though holding an invisible ball, they jerkily force their hands away from one another, and then smoothly raise their arms to either side of their bodies (Figures 1.5-1.8). Left hands on heads, right hands on hips, their bodies make an S-shape as they twist their torsos to the left (Figures 1.9-1.10). Placing their left hands on their chests, they sweep their right arms away from their sides and then bend their knees, bobbing as they bring the backs of their hands to their foreheads (Figures 1.11-1.13). Twisting and contorting torsos, waving limbs, shaking hands – all of this serves as a distraction for a gunman, who remains stationary long enough for a cafeteria worker to tackle him to the ground. As groups of students emerge shakily from beneath tables, our five figures step forward in unison while holding their fingers to their foreheads in a V-shape (Figures 1.14-1.16).

This remarkable scene is the climactic moment of ‘Invisible Self’ (1.8), the first season finale of the Netflix drama series *The OA* (Netflix 2016–). Part serialised mystery, part supernatural science fiction, the series is a dense and at times highly confusing reflection on belief, trauma, grief, and storytelling. It revolves around the mysterious OA (Brit Marling), a young woman who suddenly re-appears after having been missing for seven years. Returning to her hometown, she spends her evenings telling her story to five strangers – four young boys from the local high school (Ian Alexander, Patrick Gibson, Brendan Meyer, and Brandon Perea), and their middle-aged female teacher (Phyllis Smith). OA reveals that she was held captive by a man named Hap (Jason Isaacs), who was researching near-death experiences in the hope of proving the existence of the afterlife. Undergoing multiple near-death experiences, OA and her fellow captives discover that



Figure 1.1 The group holds their arms in front of their bodies, fingers waving.



Figure 1.2 They glide their right arms into the air...



Figure 1.3 ...snap them to their left shoulders...



Figure 1.4 ...and pivot to the left.



Figure 1.5 Fingers clenched in front of their chests...



Figure 1.6 ...they force their hands apart...



Figure 1.7 ...and slowly extend their arms...



Figure 1.8 ...stretching them to either side of their bodies.



Figure 1.9 Hands on heads and hips create an S-shape.

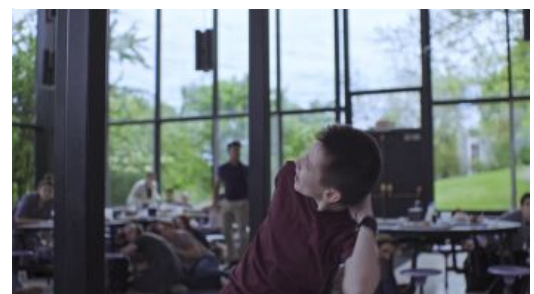


Figure 1.10 They twist down to the left.



Figure 1.11 They extend their arms to the right, fingers waving...



Figure 1.12 ...bend their knees to bob down and up...



Figure 1.13 ...and bring the backs of their hands to their foreheads.



Figure 1.14 They step forward in unison...



Figure 1.15 ...fingers splayed to their foreheads...



Figure 1.16 ...to form a V-shape across their eyes.

there are five ‘movements’ that ‘do things we cannot imagine’, and, if performed correctly and with the proper intensity of feeling, will lead them to freedom by opening a tunnel to another dimension. OA plans to teach her present-day audience the movements in order to save the four other missing people.

The OA has much in common with many of the other drama series that have dominated contemporary television over the last two decades, popularly known as ‘quality’, ‘complex’, or more recently, ‘peak’ television. It shares the dense mythology, opaque storytelling and often irritating complexity of series such as *Lost* (ABC 2004-2010), *Heroes* (NBC 2006-2010), and *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi 2004-2009). Its interest in exploring human relationships and its commitment to empathy echoes another of Netflix’s original programming, *Sense8* (Netflix 2015-2017). In Brit Marling and Zal

Batmanglii,¹ it has an auteurist (and cinematic) pedigree shared by much recent television drama, such as *House of Cards*'s David Fincher (Netflix 2013–), *Top of the Lake*'s Jane Campion (SundanceTV/BBC Two 2013–), *Transparent*'s Jill Soloway (Amazon, 2014–), and *The Knick*'s Steven Soderbergh (Cinemax 2014–2015). Its striking visuals and sweeping original score seem to invite and reward close attention and analysis, echoing the wealth of popular criticism and academic scholarship on series such as *Breaking Bad* (AMC 2008–2013), *Mad Men* (AMC 2007–2015), and *True Detective* (HBO 2014–). And despite the fact that its eight-episode first season was released following the standard Netflix distribution model, in which all episodes are made available at the same time, its narration unfolds according to a pattern of highly serialised storytelling. In structuring each episode around the group's midnight visits to listen to OA's story, the series deliberately reflects upon the structure and experience of serial narration.

But there is something else that *The OA* shares with the other television dramas of its time, something that is most obvious in the cafeteria scene. It is a strange yet mesmerising moment in a strange yet mesmerising series, and its placement as the climax of the final episode of the season signals its centrality to the *The OA*'s storytelling strategy. Yet the critical reception of 'the movements' was somewhat mixed: Alan Sepinwall scathingly states that the show is 'about the power of interpretive dance';² and *Vulture*'s Jen Chaney suggests that '[t]he Five Movements are the hardest thing to take seriously in *The OA*'.³ Critics were more forgiving of the series' commentary on the power of storytelling: Chaney herself described the show as an 'extraordinary' reflection on narrative,⁴ and Tom Kiesecoms suggests that 'the hard-to-place *something* *The OA* taps into

¹ Marling and Batmanglii are independent filmmakers who have developed a reputation for highly conceptual, complicated, and atmospheric films that engage with science-fiction themes, such as *Another Earth* (2011), *Sound of My Voice* (2011), and *The East* (2013).

² Alan Sepinwall, 'Why The Secret At The End Of Netflix's "The OA" Seems So Silly', *Uproxx*, 17 September 2016. <http://uproxx.com/sepinwall/the-oa-netflix-spoiler-recap-review/2/>

³ Jen Chaney, 'Let's Talk About the Ending of *The OA*', *Vulture*, 17 December 2016. <http://www.vulture.com/2016/12/the-oa-ending-season-one.html>

⁴ Jen Chaney, 'Netflix's *The OA* is an Extraordinary, Binge-Worthy December Surprise', *Vulture*, 16 December 2016. <http://www.vulture.com/2016/12/netflix-oa-is-your-binge-worthy-december-surprise.html>

so effortlessly and poignantly is nothing more and nothing less than the transformative power of storytelling itself.’⁵ However, in attempting to separate the movements from the question of storytelling, these critics miss the fact that the two are entirely interconnected – OA teaches her five companions the movements in the process of telling her story, and Marling herself stated that ‘[t]he movements became so possessed of narrative and story and a deep need to communicate that it became quite literally a language.’⁶ Philosopher and dance theorist Erin Manning, in her call to envision modes of thought as an ever-unfolding movement, suggests that ‘movement tells stories quite differently than does a more linear and stable’ mode of interpretation. I am hesitant to claim that this is ‘different’, for this runs the risk of reifying dramas such as *The OA* as unique, novel, and thus inescapably superior forms of television. But movement *does* tell stories. The cafeteria scene demonstrates how the series very specifically and explicitly invests its narrative and affective impact in the moving body – something that, I believe, is shared more widely across television, so-called ‘quality’ television included.

In Walter Burke Barbe’s famous (if oversimplified) model of styles of learning, we prefer to make sense of our world through one of three sensory modalities – the visual, the auditory, and the kinaesthetic.⁷ This is sometimes simplified as learning by seeing, by hearing or by doing, referring to the respective sensations of sight, sound, and moving through space. While this tripartite structure of meaning making was designed for pedagogical purposes, it makes a more general and interesting point about the ways in which we might prefer, or might be encouraged, to make sense of the world around us, a world that includes our various forms of screen media. Most theories of screen media, television studies included, focus exclusively on audio-visual engagement. Yet I believe

⁵ Tom Kiesecoms, ‘Why Netflix’s *The OA* is a Triumph of Creative Open-Mindedness and Productive Ambiguity’, *ScreenAnarchy*, 28 December 2016. <http://screenanarchy.com/2016/12/why-netflixs-the-oa-is-a-triumph-of-creative-open-mindedness-and-productive-ambiguity.html>

⁶ Gia Kourlas, ‘Netflix’s “*The OA*” and the Transformative Power of Dance’, *The New York Times*, 2 February 2017. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/02/02/arts/dance/netflixs-the-oa-and-the-transformative-power-of-dance.html>

⁷ Walter Burke Barbe, Raymond H. Swassing, and Michael N. Milone, *Teaching Through Modality Strengths: Concepts and Practices* (Columbus: Zaner-Bloser, 1979).

that kinaesthesia remains a way in which we interpret our world and read the stories it offers us. I will expand upon my definition of the term in the following chapter, but for now, it suffices to say that I understand kinaesthesia as referring to the sensation of movement, encompassing both explicit action and a more general awareness of the embodied dynamics of movement and space. The cafeteria scene in *The OA* uses rhythmic match-on-action editing to emphasise the power of particular movements. It employs a beautiful, haunting, sweeping violin score. Yet the meaning and emotional impact of the scene must be read through *kinaesthesia* – through how we connect to and understand the kinaesthetic qualities of force, trajectory, and amplitude as the five people move their bodies through space. The juxtapositions of strange gestures, compact force, and smooth dexterity give the movements an otherworldly power, suggesting that they may indeed have the capacity to alter the reality of the world around them. I admit to being deeply moved by this sequence, captivated by its strange beauty, and brought to tears by the poignancy of bodies moving collectively with conviction. What television critic John Corner refers to as the medium’s ‘active rendering of an active world’ thus seems to demand a kinaesthetic mode of reading.⁸

Methodology

Kinaesthesia is taken as both method and object of analysis in this thesis: as an object, it is a formal presence *within* the texts of television, and as a method, it is a descriptive language that allows us to find a way through those texts. This is a slippery structure that demands careful delineation. My main contention is that kinaesthesia operates as a *preferred reading strategy* within serial television drama, or in other words, a way in which these programmes ask us to make sense of their narrative worlds, and invite us to engage emotionally with characters and events. My main purpose is to trace how the moving body is used in television for particular narrative effect and emotional/corporeal

⁸ John Corner, “Critical Social Optics” and the Transformations of Audio-Visual Culture’, in *Relocating Television: Television in the Digital Context*, ed. by Jostein Gripsrud (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012), pp. 41–54 (p. 51).

affect, or what I am calling the *kinaesthetics* of television drama. And my main intervention is that our existing theoretical frameworks fail to properly account for the importance of kinaesthesia in television narration and engagement, meaning that incorporating the moving body into our critical language has much potential for our understanding of both these programmes and the medium itself.

For a thesis concerned with ideas of embodiment and sensation, the absence of ‘real’ bodies – or ethnographic work with the bodies of the audience – may seem at best counterintuitive and at worst completely objectionable. However, this approach is integral to my methodology and is crucial to the intervention I am attempting to make within the field of television studies. Instead of looking *at* the audience, I have chosen to look *with* them, sharing their orientation by focusing my attention on the texts of television. This perspective is, to some degree, a natural result of using kinaesthesia as a methodology. Approaching my objects of analysis in the same manner and the same direction as the audience does (rather than facing the opposite way and taking the audience as object) can be understood as a form of kinaesthetic empathy, a means of gaining understanding by sharing the same sorts of movements and orientations in space. Yet this by no means suggests that my method cannot reveal anything about audience engagement. Lynne Joyrich argues that television possesses a ‘self-receptivity’, that allows it to ‘manage conceptions of its audiences within its very texts.’⁹ By this, she means that looking at television texts can tell us something about how audiences are expected to engage with them, because those preferred structures of address are visibly embedded and managed within those texts. Helen Wheatley takes a similar methodological approach in her work on gothic television.¹⁰ Like Joyrich, Wheatley argues that ‘television drama...record[s] the viewer and the act of viewing into the programmes at hand’, making the audience and their experience of television accessible through a close analysis of a

⁹ Lynne Joyrich, *Re-viewing Reception: Television, Gender, and Postmodern Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996), p. 7.

¹⁰ Helen Wheatley, *Gothic Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006).

text.¹¹ She uses Umberto Eco's notion of the 'model viewer' to emphasise that while this may be an *imagined* or *preferred* conception of the audience, it remains integral to the text and an audience's experience of it. *The OA*'s explicit interest in serial storytelling, particularly the way it models the structure and experience of such narration through OA and her five listeners respectively, can be understood as an example of such self-receptivity. To borrow Wheatley's quotation of Eco, the reader is a 'fundamental ingredient not only in the process of storytelling but also of the tale itself'.¹²

Where Wheatley uses the term 'model viewer', I have chosen to describe this structure as a 'preferred reading strategy'. The term comes from Stuart Hall's influential work on encoding/decoding, in which he argues that a text will guide its audience towards a preferred reading, but maintains that audiences are capable of deflecting and subverting the ideological structure of such dominant readings.¹³ In using the idea of a kinaesthetic preferred reading, I am not attempting to suggest that there is no room for agency on the part of the audience. Indeed, by adding the term 'strategy', I hope to signal that any form of cultural consumption is a process marked by strategic uses of resistance as well as acceptance. I have also chosen this term over 'model viewer' for its broader scope: it indicates that television is read by more than just the eyes and that such a reading occurs in the strategic negotiation between body and screen.

My reasons for focusing on 'model' audiences and 'preferred' readings rather than 'actual' or 'real' ones are three-fold. Firstly, an investigation of the interactions between individual and screen has already been very elegantly undertaken by Helen Wood, both alone and in collaboration with Beverly Skeggs.¹⁴ Wood's exploration of how audiences

¹¹ Ibid., p. 19.

¹² Umberto Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1995), p. 1.

¹³ Stuart Hall, 'Encoding/Decoding', in *Culture, Media, Language: Working Papers in Cultural Studies, 1972-79*, ed. by Stuart Hall, Dorothy Hobson, Andrew Lowe and Paul Willis (Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies: Birmingham, 1980), pp. 107-116.

¹⁴ See Helen Wood, *Talking with Television: Women, Talk Shows, and Modern Self-reflexivity* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2009); and Beverly Skeggs and Helen Wood, *Reacting to Reality Television: Performance, Audience and Value* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012).

talk with television programmes is insightful and, I believe, answers many of the questions that a similar study of body movement might hope to achieve. Secondly, any theory that involves the body must be particularly careful of the dangers of essentialism: presuming that the embodied experience of one class of people can be easily extrapolated to become a universal standard. Undertaking audience research with regard to kinaesthetic responses to television would tell us something about how a particular type of body reacts to television – a body defined by the specifics of gender, race, class, age, able-bodiedness, and sexuality. While this would undoubtedly be interesting, it would have limited relevance beyond these particular identity categories and thus narrow theoretical value. This problem is less pressing in Wood's work: talk, as something already grounded in more locally specific ideas of the vernacular and the everyday, does not have the same dangerous proximity to essentialism as theories of the body. Finally, I do not want to engage in an argument that presumes that the materiality of the body, particularly as evidenced in 'real' bodies of 'real' audiences, is somehow more truthful and hence more worthy of study. Following such theorists as Misha Kavka, I strongly believe that questions of embodied feeling and affect can and should be 'taken as real at the site at which they are experienced'¹⁵ – a site that for television, is always oriented towards the screen.

Consequently, in order to identify television's kinaesthetic reading strategies, I am using textual analysis. Again, searching for the body through a close aesthetic analysis may seem somewhat counterintuitive. However, as the word suggests, the notion of television's kinaesthetics is inextricable from the idea of television's aesthetics. Kinaesthesia exists in the slippage between experience and aesthetics – it is both the lived experience of being a moving body and the formal, expressive power of the body. This belief in kinaesthesia's dual meaning as both experience and form is crucial to my thesis. The idea is based in two key bodies of literature (which will be outlined in depth in the

¹⁵ Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 36.

following chapter): work that returns the idea of aesthetics back to its original and historic usage as a description for sensory experience, and theories of physiological aesthetics from the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which focus on how formal features of art and sculpture derive from and address corporeal dynamics and sensory experiences. Following these theories, my use of 'kinaesthetics' makes the claim that to analyse the formal and expressive properties of a text is necessarily to consider its corporeal dynamics: how dynamics such as tension, flow, amplitude, relaxation, projection, and movement more generally are embedded within textual form and thus are made accessible to, and encouraged to be felt by, the audience.

The application of textual analysis to television has a contentious history. In her defence of her 'model viewer' method, Wheatley explains how television studies has historically been more interested in empirical analyses of 'real' viewers rather than analysing a text's imagined audience. To some extent, I believe that it is no longer necessary to defend the merits of submitting television to a close textual analysis: scholars such as Wheatley, Glen Creeber, Jason Jacobs and Karen Lury have already demonstrated the value of this approach.¹⁶ Rather than championing textual analysis in and of itself, I believe that it is time to interrogate and challenge exactly what such textual analysis looks like – the assumptions it makes and the stakes it claims. There is no lack of close textual analyses of television today; what is lacking, however, is an approach that combines such analysis with proper attention to the specificities of the medium, which includes its specific experiences. David Thorburn, in an article from 1987, makes a strong case for the textual analysis of television: 'we must be able to read these texts in something of the way the audience experiences them: as stories or dramas, as aesthetic artifacts, whose meaning will be fully available only if we employ, along with other interpretive methods, the

¹⁶ See Glen Creeber, *Serial Television: Big Drama on the Small Screen* (London: BFI, 2004); Jason Jacobs, 'Issues of Judgement and Value in Television Studies', *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4 (2001), 427-47; and Karen Lury, *Interpreting Television* (London: Oxford University Press, 2005).

strategies of reading traditionally used by critics of literature and film.’¹⁷ What is interesting here is the way that Thorburn combines his aesthetic analysis with the experience of the audience – reading a text in the same way as the audience *is* to engage in textual analysis. This idea also echoes throughout the work of Raymond Williams, who coined the term ‘structures of feeling’ to argue that culture is first and foremost a lived, emotional, and sensorial experience.¹⁸ Yet Williams believed that this experience was articulated most clearly through artistic forms – forms that include television, the medium he was perhaps most concerned with throughout his work. Williams’ work implies that attending to televisual form necessarily involves being attuned to its structures of feeling; in other words, reading television is about *feeling with* television, for the job of the critic is to read these forms as they are experienced. Televisual aesthetics, then, fundamentally involve televisual kinaesthetics, and must be analysed as such.

While much of my textual analysis is directed towards the episodes of the television series I am investigating, I also explore the paratextual material that surrounds television, such as adverts, promotional material, behind the scenes footage, critical discussions, commentaries, podcasts, and fan-produced content. Jonathan Gray describes paratexts as ‘frames and filters’ for the texts they surround, establishing the terms of reference for the sorts of meanings we make and setting the stage for the kinds of experiences we have.¹⁹ In this sense, paratexts are a particularly powerful way of identifying a text’s preferred reading strategy, visible through both the promotional language of producer paratexts and the negotiations that structure fan-created paratexts. As Gray says, a paratext ‘demands or suggests certain reading strategies’,²⁰ operating as a space to begin to trace how audiences are addressed and respond to media texts. I argue that television’s paratexts make its kinaesthetic reading strategies very explicit, and thus I

¹⁷ David Thorburn, ‘Television as an Aesthetic Medium’, *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 4 (1987), 161-73 (p. 165-6).

¹⁸ Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977).

¹⁹ Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 3.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 25.

turn repeatedly to the paratextual framing of my corpus in order to consider how we are invited to engage with televisual kinaesthetics. My use of paratexts is another attempt to ensure that my approach remains sensitive to the specificities of the television experience – in this case, the particular features of my serial television corpus. The ongoing structure of serial narration means that paratexts are always consumed alongside and in tandem with the programme itself. To some extent this is true of all paratexts; however, the segmented, ongoing nature of serial narration means that our encounters with a television text are necessarily punctuated by multiple paratexts. As Gray himself suggests, the paratexts surrounding serial narratives ‘build themselves into the text, becoming inseparable from it, buoys floating in the overflow of a serial text that direct our passage through that text’.²¹ Just as television aesthetics cannot be understood without the body, television textuality cannot be approached without an analysis of its paratexts, particularly when it comes to accessing a preferred reading strategy.

While I use a broad range of paratexts to illustrate my discussion, I return repeatedly to critical reviews of television programmes, such as the reviews of *The OA* I discussed at the beginning of this introduction. By ‘reviews’, I am referring to the US tradition of online television journalism that has developed in line with the popularity of the type of serial drama I am engaged with in this thesis. These reviews are hosted on popular culture criticism websites such as *The AV Club*, *The Mary Sue*, *Salon*, *Medium*, *Vulture*, and others. The aim of these reviews is to identify and explore a particular reading of a programme, one that can be accessed and understood by audiences. Because a review needs to make sense to as many people as possible to have value, the readings of programmes in these reviews tend to be very close to the preferred reading strategy. While some of these sites may take a deliberately oppositional reading (for example, feminist interpretations of *Game of Thrones* will explicitly reject the series’ voyeuristic pleasures), they still gesture toward and identify what they believe to be the preferred reading. Reviews are thus a powerful paratextual site through which we can identify a

²¹ Ibid., p. 43.

text's preferred reading strategy. I look at the language in which reviewers choose to express the particular affective and narrative impact of television episodes, in order to trace what this tells us about how the programmes address and are experienced by an embodied audience member. To return to Lynne Joyrich's method for television studies, she aims to 'read the logics of criticism (the representations deployed in interpretation) and the "logics of television" (TV's own representations) against one another to see what they reveal'.²² My use of reviews aims for a similar effect – reading the particular embodied tropes and metaphors used in interpretation against those used in television's own representations to reveal what I believe is a fundamental kinaesthetic reading strategy.

Reviewers' expression and circulation of preferred and oppositional readings raises another key methodological issue for this thesis – the issue of subjectivity. A reviewer takes their own personal response to a text and translates it into something that holds more objective weight and critical distance, and arguably, it is the task of academic screen criticism to do the same. However, scholarship that relies upon discussions of affect, emotion, and embodiment is frequently taken to task for a sloppy form of solipsism.²³ Affect theorists, so the argument goes, simply wax lyrical about their feelings towards a particular screen text in an uncritical and unhelpful way. Eugenie Brinkema reiterates this critique in her suggestion that the self-performative nature of affect theory 'risks turning every film theorist into a phenomenologist, each critic a mere omphaloskeptic [navel-gazer]'.²⁴ I object to this line of argument, for it ignores the long history of employing personal experience and self-performance as part of feminist critique and action. It also operates under the false belief that aesthetic critique is removed from personal feelings of passion and pleasure. Sianne Ngai more usefully

²² Joyrich, *Re-viewing Reception*, p. 5.

²³ Ruth Leys critiques the work of affect theorists such as Eve Sedgwick and Brian Massumi, for re-erecting a mind-body dualism that privileges materiality over meaning, and introspection over ideology. Such theory, she argues, 'replace[s] the idea of one's intentions with regard to objects or of the meanings those objects might have for one with the idea of the singularity of one's affective experiences'. See Leys, 'The Turn to Affect: A Critique', *Critical Inquiry*, 37 (2011), 434-72 (p. 465).

²⁴ Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 32.

recognises that aesthetic discourse has always been ‘at the deepest level a discourse about its own intersubjective and affective dynamics: about the complicated new set of feelings we might feel when we make our pleasures/displeasures public and check them against the pleasures/displeasures of others.’²⁵ Looking *at* and *talking about* screen texts, then, is always a question of negotiating and interweaving both individual feelings and what we think is a more widely accessible, ‘objective’ reaction. In other words, it involves negotiating a preferred reading strategy that combines how we feel as individuals and how we feel we are being addressed as part of a collective audience.

Throughout this thesis I will at times describe particular moments from my corpus through the prism of my own personal response to them, drawing heavily from work in affect studies that does the same. I do so with deliberately performative impact in mind, choosing to put my faith in the feminist potential of performing the self rather than capitulate to the fear of becoming Brinkema’s self-indulgent theorist. I believe that describing how I relate to a televisual moment through my body involves simultaneously describing, identifying, and evaluating that moment’s preferred reading strategy. Speaking from the self is also a way of opening up a stance of self-reflexivity into my argument, ensuring that I remain attentive to the risk of essentialising and extrapolating my own experience as universal. Elspeth Probyn presents the self as a ‘a theoretical movement into the text that carries with it the ontological traces of its local origins’, by which she means that speaking the self demands acknowledging the conditions of its possibility.²⁶ Self-performance is necessarily self-reflexive, consciously aware of how that idea of the self comes into being and is constructed. Part of my interest in the methodological potential of kinaesthesia is precisely how such self-reflexivity lends itself to analysing representational and identity politics, topics I return to repeatedly throughout this thesis.

²⁵ Sianne Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012), p. 41.

²⁶ Elspeth Probyn, *Sexing the Self: Gendered Positions in Cultural Studies* (Routledge: London, 1993), p. 69.

Furthermore, I believe that accessing these moments through my own experience aligns with my broader aim to approach my objects of analysis in a readerly (or kinaesthetically empathetic) way. Here, I follow what I believe is some of the most exciting and engaging cultural criticism: work that deliberately uses personal reflection and experience as a means of criticism, such as Sue Turnbull's descriptions of performance, Sue Thornham's discussion of the relationship between the feminist media critic and an embodied speaking position, and Amy Holdsworth's recent work on eating with television, and with screen engagement beyond the able-bodied norm.²⁷ Interestingly, each of these theorists is specifically working with television, suggesting that this approach has particular value when discussing the intimate medium of television. Indeed, I would argue that part of the value and attraction of reading this work stems from the same attraction as a programme such as *Gogglebox* (Channel 4 2013–), or a good television review: pleasures of self-recognition and shared experience, of seeing our own intimate and embodied connection to television unfold through the experience of others. Lynn Spigel, in her work on historiography, suggests that bringing popular and professional writing into a 'dialectical tension' allows us to 'explicate the biases and blind spots of both.'²⁸ Following Spigel, I believe that academic television studies could stand to learn something from the programmes it takes as its object and the popular forms of criticism it distinguishes itself from: how to address its readers as embodied beings.

The relationship between subjectivity and objectivity parallels another methodological issue at stake in this thesis – the relationship between the material and the metaphorical. My focus on the discourses surrounding television and the formal properties of its programmes means that my use of kinaesthesia may seem to veer wildly from discussions of embodied responses to analyses of metaphorical language in reviews

²⁷ See Sue Turnbull, 'Moments of Inspiration: Performing Spike', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8 (2005), 367–73; Sue Thornham, "'A good body': The Case of/for Feminist Media Studies', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6 (2003), 75–94; and Amy Holdsworth, 'Eating/Television', keynote delivered at *Material Cultures of Television*, University of Hull, 21–22 March 2016.

²⁸ Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 377.

and scholarly writing; for example, reading my own embodied response to *The OA*'s five movements against the critical confusion surrounding its meaning. However, like my use of subjective experience, I see this as a strength of kinaesthesia as a methodology, and of this thesis. Firstly, I believe that maintaining a distinction between the material and the metaphorical is counterproductive for exploring questions of embodied engagement with the screen, for it presumes that truth must *either* be found in language *or* in the body. Instead, I argue that these two registers cannot be thought without one another: the body is always lived both as a phenomenological experience *and* in language (or both how we feel it and how we talk about it), and language is always positioned both as a system of communication and as an expression of embodiment. Consequently, while a metaphor may be based in the immateriality of language, it is always grounded in reference to the material world. *The OA*'s decision to tell a highly allegorical story through dance-like movement again attests to this particular property of kinaesthesia. Here I follow Lakoff and Johnson's *Metaphors We Live By*, which presents a compelling case for the embodied nature of all metaphors.²⁹ Lakoff and Johnson argue that our everyday experience is framed through embodied metaphors: for example, we describe emotions as being 'up' or 'down' based on the posture and position of the body when it experiences such emotions. Embodied concepts such as kinaesthesia, therefore, function both in the realm of material experience and metaphorical description (just as they operate as both experience and form), and need to be given the space to do both.

The application of kinaesthesia to television does not make the problem of this metaphorical-material slippage more pressing – if anything, it justifies the methodology entirely, for television has always been tied up in questions of metaphor and flexibility. Jostein Gripsrud famously argued that television has always been understood through particular metaphors: the agricultural metaphor of 'broadcasting', the mobile metaphor

²⁹ George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980).

of 'flow'.³⁰ Similarly, David Morley highlights the way that television has often been discussed through metaphors of movement, and wonders how our analysis might benefit from 'the restoration of the broken linkage between the analysis of symbolic and physical modes of communication represented in this metaphor'.³¹ By exploring the embodied concepts at the core of the metaphors through which scholars have always talked about television and through which practitioners and critics continue to talk about television, I hope to take up Morley's call to restore the connections between the physical and the symbolic in our analysis of the medium of television.

If television exists as a metaphor of movement, then it demands a methodological approach that has the mobility and flexibility to operate across multiple registers at once. In her work on television spatiality, Anna McCarthy calls for a critical approach 'that is as elastic as the medium's relationship to its environment proves itself to be'.³² I follow McCarthy in advocating a methodological approach with a similar elasticity and sensitivity to the multiple registers through which the connection between television and the body operates. While textual analysis is my main methodological approach, I also draw widely from a range of interdisciplinary material, from film theory to cultural theory, from philosophy to phenomenology, from gender, queer, and feminist studies, from affect theory, and from some movement theory that borders on physiology. I would argue that both kinaesthesia and television, as formed in the slippages between multiple registers of meaning, demand and require a complex and multidisciplinary methodology. This is an attempt to realise the 'elastic' approach that McCarthy calls for, and to remain attuned to the mobile potential of kinaesthesia.

³⁰ Jostein Gripsrud, 'Television, Broadcasting and Flow: Key Metaphors in TV Theory', in *The Television Studies Book*, edited by Christine Geraghty and David Lusted (London: Arnold, 1998), pp. 17-32.

³¹ David Morley, 'Television as a Means of Transport: Digital Teletechnologies and Transmodal Systems', in *Relocating Television: Television in the Digital Context*, ed. by Jostein Gripsrud (Hoboken: Taylor and Francis, 2012), pp. 257-70 (p. 257).

³² Anna McCarthy, *Ambient Television: Visual Culture and Public Space* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 5.

While my use of this wide array of literature may seem somewhat disparate, it does have a certain consistency: most of the theories I draw from are inflected with a feminist lens. Rather than use Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology directly, I read the feminist poachings of his work by Vivian Sobchack. I rely heavily upon feminist critiques of aesthetic theory, such as Vernon Lee's historical work and Sianne Ngai's more recent discussions. I use philosophy and cultural theory interested in feminist questions of embodiment and power, such as Susan Leigh Foster, Iris Marion Young, and Erin Manning. This is partly a natural response to the fact that work on the body tends to be historically feminist, as it emerges out of the patriarchal dismissal of the body and the emotions. Yet it is also an attempt to articulate how a kinaesthetic methodology is well-placed to draw attention to questions of identity and power (and related issues such as empathy, desire, and belonging). *The OA* naturally weaves questions of gender, race, and non-normative forms of connection into its kinaesthetic reading strategy: Buck (Ian Alexander) is a young trans man, Alfonso (Brandon Perea) struggles under the pressure of dominant immigrant narratives of upward mobility, Steve (Patrick Gibson) uses sex and desire as a way to probe the limits of his identity, and both the five present-day companions and OA and her four fellow captives form found family structures that resist normative familial logics. E. Alex Jung, in a discussion of what they call the 'gentle queerness' of the series, suggests that the movements themselves can be read as a queer 'survivalist art', noting the importance of the fact that 'four of the characters are teenage boys, who recuperate their sense of self through dance, a feminised art form that often renders male bodies as queer.'³³ As a mode of meaning-making in television, then, I believe that kinaesthesia (as both something employed in television drama and a way of talking about such drama) might open up a space for feminist, queer, and other kinds of non-normative readings.

³³ E. Alex Jung, 'The Gentle Queerness of Netflix's *The OA*', *Vulture*, 6 January 2016. <http://www.vulture.com/2017/01/oa-netflix-gentle-queerness.html>

Finally, the use of such feminist and queer theory is a deliberate reaction against the re-masculinisation of television criticism and aesthetic analysis in the wake of the rise of quality television.³⁴ Jason Jacobs epitomises this theoretical trend, criticising television studies' concern with the local as a 'municipal' focus that hinders the universal appeal of aesthetic analysis.³⁵ Yet Jacobs fails to reflexively acknowledge that appeals to the 'universal' are almost always appeals to the 'masculine', and thus his work reiterates a gendered notion of value. Indeed, the idea of the 'municipal' as presented in Jacobs' argument – a small, parochial, and inefficient body – can be understood as feminised, particularly when opposed to his grand, romantic idea of aesthetics. Helen Piper makes a similar critique of Jacobs' work, arguing that much of the new scholarly writing on US quality television presumes that 'nothing resonates as "universally" as the existential crisis of a white, male American'.³⁶ Arguing against the conflation of 'good' television criticism with the identification of 'good' television, she highlights the importance of self-reflexive and socially responsible scholarship for a 'medium that has such enormous national reach, community potential and (possibly unmet) duties of social recognition.'³⁷ Following Piper, I believe that there is simply no point in presenting or calling for a new descriptive framework for television if it cannot account for the political issues surrounding identity, community, and society. By pairing my textual analysis with this broader range of feminist and cultural theory, I hope to avoid the universalising quagmire of television aesthetics, and to demonstrate how a kinaesthetic methodology may have wide applicability across both television and media studies, and cultural and political theory more broadly.

³⁴ See Michael Newman and Elana Levine's *Legitimizing Television* (New York: Routledge, 2012) for a thorough and illuminating discussion of how the tentpoles of contemporary television theory – the agency of digital technology, the value of aesthetics and styles, the complexity of serial narration – seek to give a historically feminised medium a new masculine legitimacy.

³⁵ Jason Jacobs, 'The Medium in Crisis: Caughie, Brunson and the Problem of US Television', *Screen*, 52 (2011), 503-11 (p. 506).

³⁶ Helen Piper, 'Broadcast Drama and the Problem of Television Aesthetics: Home, Nation, Universe', *Screen*, 57 (2016), 163-83, (p. 163).

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 181.

Corpus Selection

The television texts I have selected as the object of my analysis belong to a relatively narrow subsection of television, although one that is disproportionately over-represented in scholarly work: US serial drama. I strongly believe that kinaesthesia as methodology has applicability to all aspects of television – all programmes can be analysed through attention to the meanings and affects attached to the moving body. Comedy programmes exploit the moving body for comedic effect, most notably in slapstick; lifestyle programmes emphasise particular actions such as cooking, gardening, or renovating, in order to make their aspirational narrative seem achievable by their audience; children's programmes often explicitly address the moving bodies of their audience, encouraging them to move in certain ways or copy particular actions; television news programmes often provoke controversy when changes are made to how presenters occupy the set, such as Kirsty Young's practice of walking around while presenting the Channel Five news; and the appeal of television sports very obviously lies in the skilled kinaesthetics of athletes and players. The serial dramas I am concerned with, those programmes that are often grouped together under the label of 'quality' or 'complex' television, also clearly rely upon appeals to the embodied experience of the audience. These programmes share an interest in foregrounding and exploring bodily experiences of violence, pain, sex, death, hunger, travel, dance, exercise, and so on. Quality television, then, seems to be something of a body genre. Here I follow Linda Williams' influential work on 'body genres': those genres such as melodrama, horror, and pornography that deliberately attempt to elicit physical responses from the audience.³⁸ Many quality television programmes can be positioned at the intersection between each of these genres, although they draw from different aspects to different degrees. Consequently I argue that it might be their shared kinaesthetic preferred reading strategies that gives these US serial dramas coherence as a recognisable feature of the televisual landscape, as much if not more than their 'complex' narrational style and their expensive style.

³⁸ Linda Williams, 'Body Genres: Gender, Genre and Excess', *Film Quarterly* 44 (1991), 2-13.

Yet of course, this should not mean that the body is absent when we watch other genres of television. One of the reasons I choose to analyse these texts under the rubric of kinaesthesia (rather than the kinds of corporeal spectacle Williams is concerned with) is to avoid arguing that ‘quality’ television is simply a matter of bigger, more excessive, more spectacular aesthetics and experience. Instead, I want to read US serial drama as *television*, rather than as something that transcends its televisual trappings. Alongside spectacular forms of body movement and corporeality, these programmes also address the more ordinary dimensions of the moving body: the kinaesthetic meanings of gait and posture, the political implications of spatial occupation, and the empathetic value of corporeal familiarity. It is this appeal – to the familiar, ordinary, intimate dynamics of the lived body – that makes this a particularly *televisual* reading strategy. Kinaesthesia allows us to bring together spectacular, heightened aesthetics and experiences *and* more ordinary, everyday ones – a connection that is key to how we understand and relate to television.

I am also specifically interested in serial drama because I believe that the properties of serial narrative have certain kinaesthetic elements. Claire Perkins, in her discussion of what she calls ‘television of the body’, argues that the corporeal excesses of recent US serial narratives create a corporeal and affective form of seriality.³⁹ She suggests that one of the key pleasures of serial television is our increasing familiarity with the corporeal features of performers’ bodies.⁴⁰ This creates an affective relationship based in embodied connection, one which runs alongside and underpins our investment in more obvious forms of narrative seriality. Like Perkins, I am interested in the ‘physical dimension of television’s serial form’,⁴¹ and the question of whether the ways we live with our serial television narratives might be inextricable from the ways we live our bodies. Indeed, the tight connection between kinaesthesia and *The OA*’s explicit commentary on serial storytelling – in which telling and consuming a serialised story involves a parallel

³⁹ Claire Perkins, ‘Dancing on My Own: *Girls* and Television of the Body’, *Critical Studies in Television*, 9 (2014), 33-43.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 42.

mode of serialised embodied engagement – implies that such kinaesthetic reading strategies might go hand in hand with serial storytelling. My focus on serial narrative in this thesis aims to draw out these ideas, considering how the serial narration of US ‘complex’ drama may demand to be read and felt through the kinaesthetic body.

Furthermore, as a narrational form, seriality always emerges when the medium is seeking to define or redefine itself. Roger Hagedorn suggests that serials always ‘serve to promote the very medium in which they appear’; consequently, the serial form becomes a particularly useful site through which to identify how television imagines itself and its audience, and the particular reading strategies it invites. This is all the more the case at a time of transition, in which television is increasingly divorced from the broadcasting timetable that has been so integral to its identity as a medium. As more and more television is watched and encountered through digital streaming services – including many of the texts that make up my corpus – one of the things that continues to be used to identify it *as television* is the presence of serial narration. If the experience of serial narration remains integral to what we identify as television, then its particular patterns of engagement must tell us something about a preferred televisual experience, or a preferred reading strategy. And if those patterns have, as I will argue, particular kinaesthetic dimensions, then they become the perfect site to trace how the experience of television might demand kinaesthetic modes of meaning making.

The texts I am concerned with in this thesis explicitly engage with themes of travel, of journeys, of home and belonging. They use the body in often spectacular ways, and often ordinary ways. Many share an explicit concern with questioning the limits of the body, and seem to demand that we find new ways of moving with one another. Yet ultimately, what brings these texts together is the fact that I love them, that they inspire passion and excitement in me, that they seize my attention and my interest. I am not alone in my affection for these serial dramas; any brief glance at the television studies section of a bookshop or a library demonstrates the wealth of scholarship these series are

generating.⁴² There seems to be a fundamental question hovering over all of this work: why do these programmes inspire such devotion and such output? Why do they dominate public discussion and popular culture? The obvious answer is that these series appeal to those who have the power to set the tone of public debate – highly educated white men. I do not doubt the truth of this statement. What my work aims to achieve is to offer a different way to talk about the appeal of these series, one that remains sensitive to how they fundamentally address and rely upon those elements that stand outside masculinised taste formations – the messiness of the body, the unruliness of emotions, the tediousness of the ordinary, the mildness of the familiar, and the unnoticed but undeniable power of movement – all things that, I believe, make television the medium it is.

Chapter Outline

I have organised my chapters thematically. Each one takes a different element of the contemporary television drama – elements that I identified in *The OA* at the beginning of this introduction – and explores how these particular narrative structures, themes, and interests are articulated through a kinaesthetic reading strategy. I begin with a review of the literature, exploring scholarly work on kinaesthesia across the humanities, outlining the ways in which embodiment has been theorised in screen theory, and evaluating the recent body of writing on television aesthetics.

My second chapter revolves around what I am calling (following Pat Harrigan and Noah Wardrip-Fruin) the ‘vast narrative’⁴³ – massive, sprawling narratives which today characterise much of contemporary serial television. Using *Lost* (NBC, 2004-2010) and *Game of Thrones* (HBO, 2011–) as case studies, I explore how both programmes revolve around ideas of mobility, journeys, travel, and orientation – concerns that are articulated

⁴² I.B. Tauris’s extensive ‘Reading Contemporary Television’ series is emblematic of the wealth of scholarship on long-form serial drama.

⁴³ Pat Harrigan and Noah Wardrip-Fruin, ‘Introduction’, in *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*, ed. by Pat Harrigan and Noah Wardrip-Fruin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), pp. 1-9 (p. 2).

through their paratextual and transmedia extensions, and narrativised within the programmes themselves. Throughout the chapter I consider how kinaesthesia is key to these programmes' serial narration and modes of performance, arguing that the vast narrative addresses us as embodied beings and relies upon our embodied experience for its narrative coherency and its affective power. While these programmes certainly foreground spectacular kinds of movement, I maintain that their kinaesthetic reading strategies continue to provide access to many of the foundational features of television, such as intimacy, ordinariness, reality, mobility, seriality, liveness, and community.

The third chapter engages with questions of identity politics, exploring how television's kinaesthetic reading strategies interact with normative structures of embodiment, movement, and space. While all identity politics are always intersectional, I have restricted my discussion in this chapter to questions of gender and desire, using *Outlander* (Starz 2014–) and *Transparent* (Amazon 2014–) as my case studies. I refer to these programmes as 'female-oriented', in that they very explicitly revolve around questions of feminine embodiment, desire, agency, and the importance of telling women's stories. I explore how kinaesthetic dynamics of embodied movement and spatiality are key to how these programmes both reiterate and resist particular gendered norms. Again, I seek to ground this discussion in the particular features of the medium, arguing that these kinaesthetic gender politics continue to play out across many of the traditional sites where television and gender have intersected, such as serial narration, question of domesticity, and industrial politics.

Finally, the fourth chapter explores kinaesthetic empathy, or how our capacity to feel with and understand others might be mediated through the moving body. My case studies in this chapter are *Hannibal* (NBC 2013-2015) and *Sense8* (Netflix 2015-2017), two programmes that explicitly present empathy as a form of embodied engagement with the movements of others. I explore how the two series narrativise kinaesthetic empathy as an example of the televisual 'self-receptivity' I discussed earlier in this introduction. I consider how kinaesthetic empathy structures character development and engagement,

and pushes against the normative limits of modes of interpersonal relation and community formation. I conclude the chapter with some thoughts on evaluation, or how kinaesthetic empathy might encourage reflection on how we judge and consume our serial dramas today.

This question of evaluation is an important one. My thesis revolves around the belief that there might be ways to talk about ‘quality’ serial drama other than the traditional aesthetic analyses that saturate the scholarship. I am interested in exploring what might happen if we blur the boundaries between texts and bodies, if we bring the body back into the descriptive, analytical, and evaluative language we use when we talk about our much-loved television dramas. The somewhat bewildered critical response to *The OA*’s five movements suggests that we still lack the ability to properly account for the kinaesthetic readings our television dramas invite. *OA* herself cannot find the language to describe her kinaesthetic narrative, simply stating that the movements will help her ‘cross a border that’s hard to define’. But while our critical frameworks may fail to account for kinaesthetic readings, the moving body does tell stories, and the story I tell in this thesis aims to make the narrative impact and emotional affect of televisual kinaesthetics easier to define.

CHAPTER ONE: MOVING IMAGES, MOVING BODIES – A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The importance of movement in moving image media seems almost too obvious to warrant further attention. Despite an interest in returning sensation and corporeality to the analysis of screen media, the scholarly literature has largely been uninterested in attending to the qualities and meanings of movement. What little work exists on screen kinaesthetics remains almost exclusively limited to the cinema, unable or perhaps unwilling to look beyond the etymological link between the kinetic and the cinematic. In the following chapter, I undertake a review of the existing scholarly literature. Firstly, I trace the scholarly work on kinaesthesia, considering its historical origins and definitions, its wide use within dance theory, and more recent application in cultural theory and criticism. I then go on to explore how cinema and television scholarship has approached questions of embodied meaning and movement in their respective mediums. Finally, in order to unpack dominant understandings of contemporary television drama, I discuss the growing body of work on television aesthetics, with the aim to evaluate how kinaesthesia might intervene into these debates. Throughout this discussion I will situate these ideas in the context of my own argument and methodological framework, signalling how I aim to reconcile, revise, or extend the existing literature. I intend to demonstrate what an attention to the embodied dynamics and meanings of movement might have to offer our established understandings of televisual meaning and engagement.

Thinking with Kinaesthesia

Physiologically, the sense of kinaesthesia arises through the stimulation of sensory receptors located in the tendons and fibres of the muscles. These provide feedback about muscle tension and extension, allowing the brain to make sense of how the body exists within and moves through the world. The term was first defined in 1887 by anatomist Henry Bastian as ‘the body of sensations which result from or are directly

occasioned by movements’.¹ In 1907, physiotherapist Charles Sherrington argued that muscular sensations were ‘not motile, but postural’, predominantly communicating information about the body’s spatial position rather than its movement.² Here, Sherrington drew a distinction between the way the body senses movement and the way it senses its position – namely, between kinaesthesia and what he termed ‘proprioception’. This definitional slippage continues to structure the field: sensations of movement and sensations of space are sometimes folded together, and sometimes isolated as two distinct processes. Barry Stillman argues that because movement sensations do not preclude the sense of position or balance, the two concepts may as well be synonyms; conversely, Uwe Proske warns against completely blurring the two together, citing recent neurological research that suggests movement and position sensations may be processed differently by the central nervous system.³ This scientific debate lies beyond the scope of the thesis, and for the purposes of my argument, I follow James Gibson’s assertion that kinaesthesia is an integrative sensory mode, combining notions of both movement and space.⁴ To sense the movement of the body is also to grasp its orientation, and the awareness of one’s position *in* space also includes sensitivity to the potential for movement *through* space. My use of the term thus encapsulates the embodied dynamics of both the body’s position within space, and its movement through that space.

Yet kinaesthesia has been strangely neglected within most scholarly and popular accounts of sensory experience; as Alain Berthoz wonders, ‘by what twist did language

¹ Henry Charlton Bastian, ‘The “Muscular Sense”: Its Nature and Cortical Localisation’, *Brain*, 10 (1887), 1-89 (p.5).

² Charles Sherrington, ‘On the Proprio-ceptive System, Especially in its Reflex Aspect’, *Brain*, 29 (1907), 467-482 (p. 474).

³ See Barry C. Stillman, ‘Making Sense of Proprioception: The Meaning of Proprioception, Kinaesthesia and Related Terms’, *Physiotherapy*, 88 (2002), 667-76; and Uwe Prose, ‘Kinaesthesia: The Role of Muscle Receptors’, *Muscle and Nerve*, 34 (2002), 545-58.

⁴ Gibson states that ‘spatial behavior and spatial perception are coordinate with one another’, by which he means that our sensations of space are inextricable from our sensations of action. See James Gibson, *The Perception of the Visual World* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1950), p. 223.

suppress the sense most important to survival?’⁵ This ‘twist’ is most likely the neat categorisation of five senses with five clearly defined, externally oriented sensory organs, a correspondence that kinaesthesia, involving undifferentiated sensory inputs and sensations, cannot be neatly slotted into. This classic categorisation is often traced back to Aristotle’s work on the senses. Although he only identified four senses, merging taste and touch together, he established a value distinction between the human senses (the distanced senses of sight and hearing) and the animal senses (smell, taste and touch) that has remained largely unquestioned in much Western cultural theory, particularly with the dominance of the Cartesian mind-body dualism.⁶ Kinaesthesia, suffused as it is across (and within) the whole of the body, thus falls squarely at the bottom of every sensory hierarchy. It is thus unsurprising that despite a resurgence of scholarly interest in revalorising the sensorium (particularly within the affective and corporeal turns of the humanities), kinaesthesia remains largely forgotten. Sensory historians David Howes and Constance Classen undertake an excellent critique of historical understandings of the senses, yet only give a cursory mention to kinaesthesia as a passing interest of the nineteenth century.⁷ Kinaesthesia remains relegated to the footnotes of academic scholarship, dismissed as too vague or too historical to be worthy of interest in its own right.

Dance and performance studies have been more successful at exploiting the methodological potential of kinaesthesia. The communicative medium of dance is the moving body itself, and thus meaning in dance is always an embodied process, created and interpreted through the sensate, material body. Importantly, the body in dance – of performers and observers alike – is understood as *both* visually perceived and kinaesthetically felt. John Martin’s influential theory of metakinesis, or how dance communicates meaning to audiences, is entirely based within kinaesthesia. Martin argues

⁵ Alain Berthoz, *The Brain’s Sense of Movement* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1997), p. 25.

⁶ See Aristotle, *De Anima*, trans. by Christopher Shields (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

⁷ David Howes and Constance Classen, *Ways of Sensing: Understanding the Senses in Society* (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 171-72.

that movement acts as ‘a medium for the transference of an aesthetic and emotional concept from the unconscious of one individual to that of another’, and that such transference occurs through the ‘kinaesthetic sympathy’ we feel with the moving body.⁸ ‘Movement,’ he claims, ‘is the link between the dancer’s intention and your perception of it’,⁹ clearly setting up kinaesthesia as the preferred reading strategy for the medium of dance. More recently, dance theory has been particularly interested in questions surrounding kinaesthetic empathy.¹⁰ As a concept, kinaesthetic empathy is poised between Martin’s metakinesis and neuroscientific work on mirror neurons – groups of neurons that fire identically whether an action is being performed or observed. I will return to explore the literature surrounding kinaesthetic empathy in more detail in chapter four of this thesis; for the time being, I simply want to note that dance studies’s interest in kinaesthesia – particularly kinaesthesia as both an aesthetic property *and* a mode of audience engagement – has much to offer studies of other art forms that also foreground the body in motion, such as screen media.

Work within dance studies also provides a useful vocabulary for describing the qualities of the moving body, and has clear potential for the close analysis of moving bodies on screen. Rudolf Laban and Maxine Sheets-Johnstone both present categorical systems for movement analysis, in which movement is broken down into different components. For Laban, movement can be understood in terms of body, effort, space and shape. Body and space refer to the structural components of the movement – the trajectories that movement takes across the form of the body, and the relationship between the body and the space around it. Effort and shape refer to more qualitative dimensions of movement – the dynamic nature of the energy involved in the movement, and the shapes the body makes, both in isolation and with the surrounding space and

⁸ John Martin, *The Modern Dance* (Princeton: Princeton Book Company, [1933] 1989), p. 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

¹⁰ See the essays in *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012); and *Touching and Being Touched: Kinaesthesia and Empathy in Dance and Movement*, ed. by Gabriele Brandstetter, Gerko Egert, and Sabine Zubarik (Boston: De Gruyter, 2013).

objects. Sheets-Johnstone defines movement according to its spatial and temporal qualities. Spatial qualities of movement include amplitude (degrees of expansion and contraction) and linearity (direction and trajectory); temporal qualities include tension (the effort involved in a movement) and projection (the way energy is released in any given movement). Both Laban and Sheets-Johnstone's categories of movement revolve around the same basic principles, perhaps unsurprisingly, considering the universal laws of physics that structure human movement. However, their work serves slightly different purposes – Sheets-Johnstone's work is based in phenomenology and so is more encompassing and theoretical, whereas Laban's were specifically designed for practical application, and continue to be used for performance training in acting and dance schools, and in the fields of game design and artificial intelligence. Yet both suggest that the descriptive language of dance theory enriches our understanding of how the moving body speaks to us, and would facilitate a more fine-grained analysis of the mechanics of movement and performance in other media.

More recently, a number of scholars have sought to extend this body of scholarship on the communicative power of the moving body, considering how kinaesthesia might work in other kinds of systems of meaning. For Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, 'animation is at the very core of life', and so all human experience is essentially an experience of movement.¹¹ Discussing topics ranging from dance to evolutionary biology to phenomenological philosophy, Sheets-Johnstone constructs a compelling argument that movement is absolutely central to our experiences, thought-processes, aesthetic forms, and structures of communication. Other theorists similarly make a case for the centrality of movement, but situate this idea in relation to systems of power, rather than seemingly 'natural' qualities of embodiment. Both Susan Leigh Foster and Carrie Noland frame kinaesthesia as an experience conditioned by particular normative ideas of

¹¹ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Primacy of Movement* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999), p. xv.

corporeality, and a tool through which such norms are produced and policed.¹² Erin Manning's work usefully synthesises these two strands of scholarship – movement's primacy and its politics – presenting a philosophy of movement based in the political potential of unfolding action.¹³ She believes that 'movement tells stories quite differently than does a more linear and stable historicisation',¹⁴ by which she means that thinking through movement – as something always on the verge of becoming something else, always in a process of transformation – has the power to disrupt particular corporeal and scholarly norms and narratives. It is this methodological potential that I find so compelling and productive: attention to kinaesthesia brings together questions of aesthetics, experience, and power structures in a way that has much to offer theories of screen media.

Cinematic Kinaesthesia

Like cultural theory more generally, screen studies has shown a recent surge of interest in restoring sensory experience to scholarly analysis and criticism. Yet like cultural theory, this sensorial scholarship almost never extends to kinaesthesia. Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener trace the history of film theory through changing ideas of the spectator's sensory body.¹⁵ Yet while they suggest that contemporary film theory is a 'general theory of *movement*: of bodies, of affect, of the mind and the senses' (emphasis added), they do not mention the sense of kinaesthesia at all.¹⁶ Laura Marks's influential work on the crossmodal 'haptic visuality' of intercultural cinema possesses a similar, and

¹² See Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinaesthesia in Performance* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011); *Corporealities: Dancing Knowledge, Culture and Power*, ed. by Susan Leigh Foster (London: Routledge, 1996); and Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures / Producing Culture* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2009).

¹³ See Erin Manning, *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009); and *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

¹⁴ Manning, *Relationescapes*, p. 8.

¹⁵ Thomas Elsaesser and Malte Hagener, *Film Theory: An Introduction Through the Senses* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

rather curious, blind spot: despite focusing on the spectator's highly sensorial engagements with cinema that moves between cultures, she fails to make the leap to considering the sensations of such movement itself.¹⁷ Vivian Sobchack's elegant work on embodied meaning in the cinema similarly skirts around the topic of kinaesthesia.¹⁸ She presents an insightful and often poetic discussion of how we might make sense of the cinema through questions of orientation and touch, yet her only specific engagement with movement is more concerned with how cinematic properties augment or accentuate our visual perception of motion, rather than the kinaesthetic qualities of the moving body itself.¹⁹

The neglect of kinaesthesia within contemporary film theory is particularly puzzling for its ahistoricism. Cinema was born from a kinaesthetic curiosity, which remained the subject of much interest and debate for filmmakers and theorists working in the first half of the twentieth century. The very first moving pictures – Muybridge's stop-motion photography – were explicitly concerned with understanding the mechanics of human and animal locomotion. Hugo Münsterberg believed that a psychological understanding of cinematic spectatorship relied entirely upon 'the explanation of the motion in the pictures',²⁰ and Germaine Dulac suggested that 'the inner life made perceptible...with movement [is] the entire art of cinema'.²¹ Kinaesthesia was also a point of interest for early Soviet filmmakers, most famously in Sergei Eisenstein's celebration of the aesthetic and emotional potential of expressive movement. He suggested that

¹⁷ Laura Marks, *The Skin of the Film: Intercultural Cinema, Embodiment, and the Senses* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2000).

¹⁸ Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004).

¹⁹ See Sobchack's discussion of *La Jetée* in *Carnal Thoughts*, pp. 145-149.

²⁰ Hugo Münsterberg, *The Photoplay: A Psychological Study and Other Writings*, ed. by Allan Langdale (New York: Routledge, 2002 [1916]).

²¹ Germaine Dulac, 'The Expressive Techniques of the Cinema', in *French Film Theory and Criticism: A History/Anthology 1907-1939*, ed. by Richard Abel (Princeton: Princeton University Press, [1924] 1988), pp. 305-314 (p. 310).

montage was able to synchronise various sensory modalities – touch, smell, sight, hearing, pure emotion and movement – in order to link ‘different spheres of feeling’.²²

For the musical overtone (a beat) the term ‘I hear’ is no longer strictly appropriate. Nor ‘I see’ for the visual.

For both we introduce a new uniform formula: ‘I feel’.²³

For Eisenstein, therefore, the experience of moving images appeals to an integrative sensation of feeling, one he later refers to as ‘a new embodiment of our “motion”’.²⁴ This early work all implies that our experience of moving images is based in an embodied understanding of movement, a suggestion Sigfried Kracauer makes explicit in his belief that ‘representations of movement do cause a stir in deep bodily layers’.²⁵ Yet what Kracauer terms the ‘kinaesthetic responses’ of the film spectator have disappeared from scholarship since the mid-20th century. Instead, the dominant theoretical frameworks of psychoanalysis, structuralism, and apparatus theory have concentrated on the relationship between the disembodied eye of the spectator and the static film frame, emphasising a dematerialised screen experience.

Tom Gunning provides a compelling critique of this theoretical amnesia.²⁶ He argues that the ability of moving images to affect viewers on both a physiological and emotional level – an ability that so delighted early filmmakers and theorists – remains a crucial part of contemporary film spectatorship and production, yet sorely lacks close theoretical engagement. Like Sheets-Johnstone, he believes that movement has a certain primacy that imbues a sense of reality to a film.²⁷ ‘Cinematic motion crosses the boundaries between...embodied senses and flights of fancy’, he argues, ‘endowing the

²² Sergei Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, ed. and trans. by Jay Leyda (London: Faber, 1968), p. 61.

²³ Sergei Eisenstein, *Film Form: Essays in Film Theory*, ed. and trans. by Jay Leyda (London: Dennis Dobson, 1963), p. 71.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 149.

²⁵ Sigfried Kracauer, *Theory of Film: The Redemption of Physical Reality* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965), p. 158.

²⁶ Tom Gunning, ‘Moving Away from the Index: Cinema and the Impression of Reality’, *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies*, 18 (2007), 29-52.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 40-44.

fantastic with the realistic impression of visual motion.²⁸ He also suggests that theorising screen motion opens a space to reconsider various aesthetic and theoretical issues, such as screen media's relationship with other media, the question of indexicality, and audience's affective engagement with the moving image.²⁹ Here, he gives kinaesthesia the same breadth of methodological potential as the cultural theorists I discussed earlier in this chapter. While his analysis is limited to action and experimental films, he makes a broader call for the development of kinaesthetic screen theory, suggesting that a return to considering cinematic motion has much to offer theories of spectatorship, style, and cinema's relationship with new media. Gunning's article thus presents a persuasive justification for a re-focus on motion on screen, particularly as a way to bring together the history of the discipline and new textual and theoretical developments.

Yet Gunning's call remains almost entirely unheeded. Scholars have long been interested in the relationship between the body and the cinema – the body in pain, the body in ecstasy, the body in aesthetic and spectacular glory, but rarely the body in motion. Linda Williams presents what she calls the three 'body genres' of cinema – horror, melodrama, and pornography – which deliberately and very obviously encourage corporeal reading strategies.³⁰ Each of these genres is brimming with particular kinds of movement: Williams's colloquial description of the three as the 'fear-jerker', the 'tear-jerker', and the 'jerk-off' attests to the particular kinds of movement profiles common to the genres.³¹ However, Williams focuses exclusively on mimetic movements, or sensorial responses that directly parallel the action on screen. Consequently, her discussion largely revolves around psychoanalytically-inflected ideas of agency and passivity, or sadism and masochism, thus failing to consider the broader and more varied ways in which an audience might connect with on-screen movement. While Williams's work provides a useful starting point for considering embodied engagement with screen media, it

²⁸ Ibid., p. 45.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 38.

³⁰ Linda Williams, 'Film Bodies: Gender, Genre and Excess', *Film Quarterly*, 44 (1991), 2-13.

³¹ Ibid., p. 5.

continues to reflect the general trend in the literature – descriptions of movement too often return to frameworks that privilege visuality and traditional theories of spectatorship, thus failing to think through either the agency of the body in motion or how kinaesthesia might offer a challenge to existing structures of spectatorship.

Aaron Anderson is one of the few scholars to consider the communicative role of kinaesthesia in the cinema.³² Writing in 1998 (a decade before Gunning), he critiques the literature on cinematic bodies for focusing on musculature over motion, on visual spectacle over kineticism. He argues that this work cannot adequately discuss the idea of movement, and thus ‘we need to find another form of discourse to describe these concepts.’ Drawing from John Martin’s concept of metakinesis, which I outlined earlier in this chapter, he explores the way the audience interprets the fighting movements of Steven Seagal through their own bodies. If we all know what it feels like to be a human body moving in space, we will always possess some intrinsic understanding of movement. Importantly, this does not have to be a simple mimetic connection – we do not have to possess knowledge of exactly how to execute a specific action – but simply a grasp of dynamics of force, speed, flexibility, and their associated affective qualities. Anderson’s lucid argument is grounded in his own experience of using Bruce Lee films in order to bodily prepare for army training, and provides a compelling example of what attention to kinaesthesia (particularly as a preferred reading strategy) can offer the close reading of screen texts.

Jennifer Barker also considers kinaesthetic engagements with the cinema.³³ Drawing heavily from the phenomenological film theory of Vivian Sobchack,³⁴ she argues that the language of the cinema appropriates the gestures of the body in order to establish a kind of perceptual parallelism – for example, the rhythms of shot reverse-shot editing reflect the way we turn our heads in conversation, and a tracking shot is equivalent to a

³² Aaron Anderson, ‘Kinaesthesia in Martial Arts Films: Action in Motion’, *Jump Cut*, 42 (1998), 1-11.

³³ Jennifer Barker, *The Tactile Eye: Touch and the Cinematic Experience*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009).

³⁴ See Vivian Sobchack, *The Address of the Eye: A Phenomenology of Film Experience* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); and *Carnal Thoughts*.

leaning-in movement. This establishes a kinaesthetic relationship of ‘muscular empathy’ between the film and the spectator,³⁵ which enables us to ‘leave the theatre feeling invigorated or exhausted, though we ourselves have hardly moved a muscle’.³⁶ Yet this quote betrays the key limitation in Barker’s argument: her belief that kinaesthetic engagement with screen media ends at the door to the theatre. By implicitly presenting embodied screen engagement as the domain of the traditional cinematic experience, Barker forgets that both screen texts and human bodies interact beyond the walls of the movie theatre – something that Anderson, with his evocative description of watching a VHS in an army barracks, more thoughtfully understands.

This is a problem that recurs throughout the small body of screen scholarship that does consider the role of kinaesthesia in the experience of moving images. In Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason’s edited collection on kinaesthetic empathy, three essays investigate kinaesthetic empathy in the cinema: Guillemette Bolens’ exploration of Charlie Chaplin’s silent cinema,³⁷ Adriano D’Aloia’s close analysis of watching acrobats on screen,³⁸ and Lucy Fife Donaldson’s discussion of empathy as a means of character access, analysing Mia Farrow’s performance in *Rosemary’s Baby*.³⁹ Each of these scholars demonstrates how kinaesthesia can open up new perspectives on the way we relate to characters and bodies on screen. Yet the essays reveal that the meeting of kinaesthesia and screen theory always occurs across the same types of movement and the same moving bodies – the expert, the extraordinary, the swift, and the spectacular – again

³⁵ Barker, *The Tactile Eye*, p. 81.

³⁶ Ibid., p. 82.

³⁷ Guillemette Bolens, ‘Kinaesthesia in Charlie Chaplin’s Silent Films,’ in *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 143-56.

³⁸ Adriano D’Aloia, ‘Cinematic Empathy: Spectator Involvement in the Film Experience,’ in *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 93-107.

³⁹ Lucy Fife Donaldson, ‘Effort and Empathy: Engaging with Film Performance,’ in *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 157-74.

naturalising a connection between the kinaesthetic and the cinematic that belies the promise of the term.

Televisual Kinaesthesia

Yet if kinaesthesia is vital to our everyday movement in the world, then it must play an important part in the perception of *all* screen based movement, not just the excessively and expertly kinetic; as Amelia Jones suggests, ‘there is no moment of non-kinaesthetic empathy in our apprehension of...everyday objects and bodies in the world’.⁴⁰ I argue that kinaesthesia has much to offer the study of smaller, more fragmentary, and more ubiquitous screen cultures – particularly the everyday technologies of television. However, to date, with the notable exception of Claire Perkins’s recent work (which I will return to explore in depth shortly), there has been next to no discussion of kinaesthesia in television. Rather, like cinema scholarship, television studies has been more concerned with the static body as a spectacular image. This work is echoed across the body of scholarship that explores the spectacle of the dead body (particularly the female body) in crime television.⁴¹ Charlotte Brunsdon notes that contemporary crime drama is less concerned with exploring the processes of policing than with ‘staring at bodies’,⁴² a comment that I would extend to the scholarly literature itself, which is also more interested in staring at visual spectacle than attending to the meanings of particular actions. Alexia Smit highlights the recent trend in exploring the interior of the human body on television, yet emphasises the dynamics of visual pleasure and intimacy over any

⁴⁰ Amelia Jones, ‘Foreword: Kinaesthetic Empathy in Philosophical and Art History: Thoughts on How and What Art Means’, in *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 11-15 (p. 12).

⁴¹ See Charlotte Brunsdon, ‘Structures of Anxiety: Recent British Television Crime Fiction’, *Screen*, 39 (1998), 223-243; Susan Sydney-Smith, ‘Endless Interrogation: *Prime Suspect* Deconstructing Realism Through the Female Body’, *Feminist Media Studies*, 7 (2007), 189-202; and Sue Thornham, ‘“A Good Body”: The Case of/for Feminist Media Studies’, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 6 (2003), 75-94.

⁴² Brunsdon, ‘Structures of Anxiety’, p. 242.

consideration of movement.⁴³ We can trace a similar trend throughout the literature on reality television: scholars have outlined how televisual bodies are complicit in perpetuating particular norms of identity and consumption cycles, again focusing mainly on static corporeal signifiers such as weight, clothing, or hair and makeup.⁴⁴ Skeggs and Wood refer to reality television's 'forensic focusing on...parts of bodies', evoking, much like writing on crime television, a static, passive body waiting to be dissected and visually examined.⁴⁵ As Rachel Moseley notes, the body in reality television is 'put on display for the approval of the audience',⁴⁶ again likening the body to a static object for consumption rather than an entity in motion. While all of this work is compelling and offers valuable insights into corporeal spectacle on television, its failure to closely engage with questions of movement indicates that there is more work to be done on the power and meaning of the *moving* body.

Claire Perkins's recent essay makes a valuable first step toward extending the scholarship on televisual bodies.⁴⁷ In an elegant analysis of HBO's *Girls* (2012-2017), she draws from dance theory to contend that much of the meaning in television narrative is communicated through the corporeality of the moving body. She argues that television's focus on dialogue facilitates a creative juxtaposition with the gestural capacities of the body, creating what she terms a 'physical televisual verbosity' that communicates meaning to the audience.⁴⁸ She identifies a similar corporeal dimension to the typical serial narratives of television, suggesting that our familiarity with such texts is grounded in acquired knowledge of the physical forms of the characters – their body language, their

⁴³ See Alexia Smit, 'Visual Effects and Visceral Affect: "Tele-Affectivity" and the Intensified Intimacy of Contemporary Television', *Critical Studies in Television*, 8 (2013), 92-107.

⁴⁴ See Beverley Skeggs and Helen Wood's discussion of how the appearance of the body accrues commodified value through reality television in *Reacting to Reality Television: Performance, Audience and Value* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012); and Meredith Jones's work on the ways in which the dynamics of the gaze create particular normative bodies in cosmetic surgery television. 'Media-bodies and Screen-births: Cosmetic Surgery Reality Television', *Continuum*, 22 (2008), 515-24.

⁴⁵ Skeggs and Wood, *Reacting to Reality Television*, p. 13.

⁴⁶ Rachel Moseley, 'Makeover Takeover on British Television', *Screen*, 41 (2000), 299-314 (p. 306).

⁴⁷ Claire Perkins, 'Dancing on My Own: *Girls* and Television of the Body', *Critical Studies in Television*, 9 (2014), 33-43.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 41.

gestural movements, their appearance – as much as with the patterns and formulas of the narrative. Perkins' work is compelling and insightful, and the only piece to clearly recognise the potential of linking kinaesthetic theory with television studies. Yet her relatively specific focus – on excessively performative bodies within a discrete narrative – suggests that there is scope for a wider consideration of kinaesthesia in television. If kinaesthesia communicates meaning in television, then it might work as a *preferred* mode of making such meaning, and hence is worthy of a more detailed analysis.

To some extent, my critique of the existing scholarship may seem like a relatively pedantic issue with the focus of corporeal scholarship. However, I believe that questioning the language we use and the frameworks we employ for discussing screen spectatorship and meaning-making is crucial for our understanding of media. For while a close engagement with kinaesthesia remains somewhat scarce within television studies, scholars have always used the language and metaphors of movement to more broadly describe television aesthetics and engagement. Travel, orientation, mobility, and flow: the frames of reference we employ to make sense of television seem to suggest a deep kinaesthetic core to the medium. Raymond Williams's two foundational theories of the medium – flow and mobile privatisation – are both metaphors of movement, one based in the disorienting experience of travelling away from home, and the other in the comforting feeling of being at home while on the move.⁴⁹ As the so-called 'window on the world', the experience of watching television has always been equated to a feeling of travel, reflected in Joshua Meyrowitz's famous statement that television 'escorts children across the globe even before they have permission to cross the street.'⁵⁰ Television narrative itself is something that moves and something that invites mobile metaphors: Robyn Warhol describes serial narration as akin to the 'ebb-and-flow' of the sea,⁵¹ and Will Brooker

⁴⁹ Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form*, (London: Routledge, 1974).

⁵⁰ Joshua Meyrowitz, *No Sense of Place: The Impact of Electronic Media on Social Behaviour* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), p. 238.

⁵¹ Robyn R. Warhol, *Having a Good Cry: Effeminate Feelings and Pop-Culture Forms* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2003), p. 105.

discusses the textual ‘overflow’ of contemporary television programmes that spill beyond the limits of the broadcast format.⁵²

In the introduction to this thesis I argued that our metaphorical language has much to reveal about our embodied experiences. The ease with which we reach for metaphors of movement to describe television clearly suggests that kinaesthesia has always been crucial to our experience of the medium. Yet there is a strange slippage between the frames of reference and turns of phrase we use to make sense of television and our relationship to it, and the scholarly frameworks and objects of analysis we tend to privilege when we talk about contemporary television drama – mobility in the former, and viscosity in the latter. For just as scholars prefer to focus on the body as an image rather than a moving entity, television studies has recently been much more eager to re-frame television as an aesthetic medium, rather than a kinaesthetic one. I.B. Tauris’s extensive Reading Contemporary Television series epitomises this trend: collections on series such as *24*, *CSI Crime Scene Investigation* and *Mad Men* devote multiple chapters to questions of visual and aural style,⁵³ suggesting that the sanctioned reading of contemporary television is an (audiovisual) aesthetic one. In what follows I now turn to explore and evaluate this recent surge of scholarly interest in television aesthetics, considering what we might gain if we allow such aesthetic analyses to be more attuned to the kinaesthetic properties that seem to lie at the heart of the medium.

Television Aesthetics

The term ‘television aesthetics’ has what Sarah Cardwell calls a ‘declarative function’,⁵⁴ signalling a break with the discipline’s early cultural studies foundation in

⁵² Will Brooker, ‘Living on Dawson’s Creek: Teen Viewers, Cultural Convergence, and Television Overflow’, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4 (2001), 456-472.

⁵³ See *Mad Men: Dream Come True TV*, ed. by Gary R. Edgerton (London: I.B. Tauris, 2011); *Reading CSI: Crime TV Under the Microscope*, ed. by Michael Allen (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007); and *Reading 24: TV Against the Clock*, ed. by Steven Peacock (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007).

⁵⁴ Sarah Cardwell, ‘Television Aesthetics: Stylistic Analysis and Beyond’, in *Television Aesthetics and Style*, ed. by Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 23-44 (p. 23).

favour of methodologies from film and literary studies, such as close textual analysis. It has been, perhaps unsurprisingly, a hugely contentious term, attracting criticism for re-establishing the pre-audience text (i.e. a definitive version of a text that exists outside questions of reception and consumption),⁵⁵ erecting grand narratives of the medium,⁵⁶ perpetuating the media hierarchy that dismisses television as the lesser relative of the cinema,⁵⁷ and promoting elite, masculine taste cultures.⁵⁸ Jason Jacobs notes that while the term is the 'favoured badge of a scholar's interest in the medium',⁵⁹ it is used variously to refer to the search for medium-specificity, discussions of value judgements, or simply an interest in close textual analysis. Such a broad definitional scope contributes to the belief, at least among scholars deliberately positioning their work within the field, that television aesthetics remains a somewhat under-studied area. Both Sarah Cardwell and Tanya DiTommaso see aesthetic approaches to television as a recent area of inquiry; yet where Cardwell argues that more attention needs to be given to textual analysis rather than to the properties of the medium,⁶⁰ DiTommaso claims that it is the medium, not the textual units of individual programmes, which have been neglected in aesthetic discussions.⁶¹ Similarly, in the introduction to their edited collected *Television Aesthetics and Style*, Jacobs and Peacock suggest that analyses of television style 'remain curiously absent',⁶² a somewhat bizarre statement that ignores everything from John Caldwell's significant

⁵⁵ See Matt Hills, *Fan Cultures* (London: Routledge, 2001).

⁵⁶ See Jason Jacobs, 'Issues of Judgement and Value in Television Studies,' *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4 (2001), 427-447.

⁵⁷ Deborah L. Jaramillo, 'Rescuing Television from "the Cinematic": The Perils of Dismissing Television Style', in *Television Aesthetics and Style*, ed. by Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 67-75.

⁵⁸ For an excellent outline and critique of such masculinisation, see Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television: Media Convergence and Cultural Status* (New York: Routledge, 2012).

⁵⁹ Jason Jacobs, 'Television Aesthetics: An Infantile Disorder,' *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 3 (2006), 19-33 (p. 19).

⁶⁰ Sarah Cardwell, 'Television Aesthetics,' *Critical Studies in Television*, 1 (2006), 72-80.

⁶¹ Tanya DiTommaso, 'The Aesthetics of Television,' *Crossings*, 3 (2003), para 11.
<<http://crossings.tcd.ie/issues/3.1/DiTommaso/>>

⁶² Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock, 'Introduction', in *Television Aesthetics and Style*, ed. by Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 1- 20 (p. 1).

work on televisuality,⁶³ to Jeremy Butler's extensive work on television style,⁶⁴ to Robin Nelson's discussion of the stylistic signatures of what he calls 'high-end' television drama.⁶⁵ This pervasive yet paradoxical line of scholarship clearly demonstrates the need for a more careful consideration of the relationship between television and aesthetic theory.

Early work in television aesthetics was concerned with establishing a theory of the medium as a whole, particularly in relation to the technological features and broadcasting specificities that separated it from the cinema. Raymond Williams' seminal work on televisual flow is one of the first attempts at exploring the aesthetics of television.⁶⁶ For Williams, television's programmes and products exist as 'planned flow' on the macro-level of the broadcast schedule, rather than as separate, individual entities.⁶⁷ Writing a few years later, Herbert Zettl's discussion of the 'rare case' of television aesthetics follows on from Williams' framework, suggesting that television is a 'continuous, fleeting, constantly regenerating mosaic'.⁶⁸ However, he focuses more on the technology of the medium rather than the structural aspects of programming, exploring the aesthetic qualities of elements such as light, motion, sound, and the dimensions of space. John Ellis similarly focuses on the fragmentary nature of television, but argues for the integrity of what he calls the segment – individual units that can be combined into larger wholes, but still form discrete units of meaning.⁶⁹ For Ellis, the segment is the basic narrative and aesthetic unit of television, and is the result of television's inability to command the concentrated gaze of the audience, due to its limited screen size and distracting domestic environment. In all of this early work, 'television aesthetics' comes to

⁶³ John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality: Style, Crisis and Authority in American Television* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 1995).

⁶⁴ Jeremy G. Butler, *Television Style* (New York: Routledge, 2010).

⁶⁵ Robin Nelson, *State of Play: Contemporary 'High-End' TV Drama* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007).

⁶⁶ Raymond Williams, *Television*.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 91.

⁶⁸ Herbert Zettl, 'The Rare Case of Television Aesthetics', *Journal of the University Film Association*, 30 (1978), 3-8 (p. 7).

⁶⁹ John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge, 1992).

stand for the visually deficient, inherently partial, non-attentive experience of broadcast television.

Later work in television aesthetics shifted focus towards the features of the individual television text, rather than technological parameters and the specificities of the broadcasting context. John Caldwell's theory of televisuality, which suggests that the audience can experience an attentive, concentrated engagement with the televisual image, is the key progenitor of this line of scholarship. Caldwell argues that television's images are marked by the performance of style, namely an excessive and exhibitionist visuality. He sees two key modalities of televisuality: the cinematic, which exploits the production values and visual conventions of feature films; and the videographic, a graphic-heavy, rapid-paced style of 'acute hyperactivity' that draws attention to its own mediation. Interestingly, Caldwell frames this distinction as one between 'quality' and 'quality control'.⁷⁰ Cinematic televisuality bestows an 'air of distinction' on its texts and is relatively scarce in the 'bread-and-butter' staples of television;⁷¹ videographic televisuality, conversely, is more ordinary and more prevalent across a whole suite of television texts. Caldwell does recognise that the link between style and distinction is a product of industrial and economic discourses, not a pure aesthetic canon. Yet by drawing attention to television's 'urge to aestheticise',⁷² he opens up a space in which theory can succumb to the same impulse, constructing an inevitable bridge between the aesthetic analysis of programmes and the value judgements of traditional aesthetic theory. In other words, by linking 'cinematic' televisuality with an aura of rare 'quality', Caldwell unwittingly opens the floodgates for the valorisation of 'quality' television drama.

Most of the recent work on television aesthetics focuses specifically on so-called 'quality' television drama. In the American context, quality television needs to be understood as the result of a series of industrial and distributional changes in the late 1990s, in which the rise of cable television and the fragmentation of the market lead to

⁷⁰ Caldwell, *Televisuality*, p. 134.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 18.

⁷² Ibid., p. 21.

what John Ellis refers to as an ‘era of plenty’.⁷³ As television content became more abundant, accessible, and available, it was no longer commercially viable to target content towards an imagined mass audience. Consequently, channels began to target niche audiences and establish a sense of brand loyalty, in order to stand out within a crowded marketplace. Quality television aims to appeal a highly educated and affluent audience by drawing from the features of cinema and literature – visual spectacle, narrative complexity, the presence of an auteur, and what Cardwell calls a ‘certain “seriousness”’.⁷⁴ Such texts are not just well-positioned for analysis through a traditional aesthetic lens, but explicitly invite it; indeed, as Herbert Schwaab notes, the new scholars moving into television studies from the disciplines of film and literary studies are those very same educated, elite groups targeted by the texts themselves.⁷⁵ There is thus a somewhat circular relationship between the scholarly literature and the commercial imperatives of the industry: quality television’s markers of distinction attract educated audiences, who go on to discuss the programmes in the frames of reference of traditional aesthetic quality, thus adding further value to these texts. Ultimately, this serves to tighten the link between the genre of programming and conventional aesthetic evaluation, precluding the possibility of alternative approaches.

Perhaps inevitably, this recent work on television aesthetics unproblematically reproduces two of the key assumptions from traditional aesthetic theory: firstly, that the aesthetic object is inherently a ‘good’ object, and secondly, that the aesthetic experience is fundamentally a ‘good’ experience, one of pleasure, wonder, and intellectual stimulation. These assumptions can be attributed to the long shadow Immanuel Kant’s *Critique of Judgement* casts over aesthetic theory. Kant explored questions of beauty and taste, arguing that taste was ‘merely contemplative’ – a disinterested judgement based on

⁷³ John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2000).

⁷⁴ Sarah Cardwell, ‘Is Quality Television Any Good? Generic Distinctions, Evaluations and the Troubling Matter of Critical Judgement’, in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, ed. by Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 19-31 (p. 22).

⁷⁵ Herbert Schwaab, ‘“Unreading” Contemporary Television,’ in *After the Break: Television Theory Today*, ed. by Marijke de Valck and Jan Teurlings (Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press, 2013), pp. 21-33 (p. 25).

appearance and representation rather than use or purpose.⁷⁶ For Kant, beauty is not simply a property within objects, but is something that must be reacted to. This reaction is always intersubjective rather than entirely personal, for to claim something as beautiful is to presume that others will find it beautiful as well. Consequently, aesthetic judgement is the foundation for the judgement of morality, and has an uplifting, virtuous, transformative quality. The Kantian aesthetic experience can thus be summarised as the attentive appreciation of beauty, involving powerful, positive feelings, but still remaining distanced and disinterested. Aesthetic judgement ultimately transforms the mundanity of everyday experience and involves an extra-ordinary perceptual capacity; as Findlay declares, it is 'uniquely marked out, extraordinary in its delight...involv[ing] the concentration, the mental undistractedness...that we too often cannot muster at all.'⁷⁷

While Diané Collinson notes that Kant proposed a theory of beauty, not of art in general,⁷⁸ his work has been anchored to art theory to the point where aesthetic inquiry is essentially a discourse of fine art. Consequently, the aesthetic analysis of television is overly concerned with recuperating television texts into the realm of proper artistic contemplation. Robert J. Thompson and Jason Jacobs both discuss US quality television in terms of a good, moral experience: Thompson in his description of a 'new television aesthetic...transform[ing] the medium in positive and interesting ways',⁷⁹ and Jacobs in his belief that US drama offers a 'serious engagement' with thematic concerns, taking the viewer to a place beyond the emptiness of the 'relentless spectacle of the present'.⁸⁰ Such language recurs again and again in discussions of contemporary television: Jason Mittell

⁷⁶ Immanuel Kant, *Kant's Critique of Judgement*, trans. by J. H. Bernard (Macmillan: London, 1914 [1790]), p. 71.

⁷⁷ J. N. Findlay, 'The Perspicuous and the Poignant: Two Aesthetic Fundamentals,' *The British Journal of Aesthetics* 7 (1967), 3-19 (p. 4).

⁷⁸ Diane Collinson, 'Aesthetic Experience', in *Philosophical Aesthetics: An Introduction*, ed. by Oswald Hanfling (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), pp. 111-78 (p. 143).

⁷⁹ Robert J. Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age: From Hill Street Blues to ER* (New York: Continuum, 1996), p. xx.

⁸⁰ Jason Jacobs, 'The Medium in Crisis: Caughie, Brunsdon and the Problem of US Television', *Screen* 52 (2011): 503-511 (p. 509).

describes narrative complexity as a 'true aesthetic innovation',⁸¹ Thompson refers texts that are 'more artistic than usual',⁸² and Christopher Anderson notes that celebrating HBO's dramas as works of art inevitably evokes the 'belief that others are nothing more than noisy diversions clattering along the conveyor belt of commercial culture.'⁸³ All of these theorists, intentionally or otherwise, invoke the image of a good televisual object emerging from a bland backdrop of standard television fare.

Sarah Cardwell, perhaps anticipating future criticism, argues that while an aesthetic experience is one of disinterested, 'elevated engagement',⁸⁴ this distance is not a remote coolness, but simply an 'informed approach to the artwork, free from distraction'.⁸⁵ Cardwell's distinction is a false one, making a problematic conflation between being 'informed' and being 'elevated' that implies that aesthetic analysis always operates at the 'higher' level of cognition. This can be read as a reaction against existing work on television audiences, which largely focuses around questions of emotional engagement over seemingly 'cool' aesthetic appreciation. In particular, this scholarship focuses on two audience groups that tend to be culturally disparaged – female viewers of soap operas, and fans. Ien Ang, in her groundbreaking study of the pleasures of watching *Dallas* (CBS 1978-1991), argues that audiences understood and valued the series through its 'emotional realism' rather than a more cognitive, rational interpretative framework.⁸⁶ She suggests that the programme's appeal was based on its oscillating emotionality, an undulating pattern that mirrors the everyday emotional experiences of audiences themselves. For Ang, therefore, soap opera viewing is a mode in which 'emotions form the

⁸¹ Jason Mittell, 'Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television', *The Velvet Light Trap*, 58 (2006), 29-40 (p. 30).

⁸² Thompson, *Television's Second Golden Age*, p. 12.

⁸³ Christopher Anderson, 'Producing an Aristocracy of Culture in American Television', in *The Essential HBO Reader*, ed. by Gary R. Edgerton and Jeffrey P. Jones (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 2008), pp. 23-41 (p. 29).

⁸⁴ Cardwell, 'Television Aesthetics: Stylistic Analysis and Beyond', p. 33.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 34.

⁸⁶ Ien Ang, *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, trans. by Della Couling (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 45.

point of impact'.⁸⁷ Henry Jenkins draws directly from Ang's work, suggesting that such emotional realism is a 'fannish ideal'.⁸⁸ He lists some of the key criticisms levelled at fan audiences: they are 'brainless', 'obsessed', 'feminised...through their intimate engagements with mass culture', and 'emotionally and intellectually immature'.⁸⁹ These criticisms all pivot upon the same assumption: that the proper mode of engagement with culture is one of rational, intellectual distance. Jenkins himself reinforces this idea: he spends much of *Textual Poachers* championing fan activity as a resistant activity, thus anxiously re-purposing emotional proximity as political action. Such emotional, close engagement with television, then, largely remains something to be transcended (as in Jenkins) or limited to particular audiences.⁹⁰

While Cardwell asserts that television aesthetics has much to learn from the work of philosophical aesthetics,⁹¹ she seems to mean work in the tradition of classical philosophical aesthetics. This ignores a whole collection of recent aesthetic theory that has much more potential for the field of television studies. In particular, there has been a recent interest in re-claiming the everyday as a site for aesthetic analysis and encounter. Yuriko Saito's insightful work on everyday aesthetics contends that our interactions with ordinary objects do involve aesthetic orientations.⁹² She cites examples such as reactions towards the 'dingy, nondescript, or plain-looking', the dirty and the clean, and the depressing and dreary as key aesthetic qualities we use when navigating our everyday existence.⁹³ While such reactions may lack the contemplative dimension of classical aesthetics – often mild and mundane, or altogether negative – they are no less *aesthetic* for

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 45.

⁸⁸ Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), p. 116.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 10.

⁹⁰ Alberto García's recent collection on emotions in television includes many essays that focus on serial drama, and provides a useful starting point for beginning to address this gap in the scholarship. See *Emotions in Contemporary TV Series*, ed. by Alberto N. García (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2016).

⁹¹ See Cardwell, 'Television Aesthetics: Stylistic Analysis and Beyond'.

⁹² Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

⁹³ Ibid., p. 10.

being so, in that they still involve perceptual engagement with sensual and formal qualities. Saito's work is echoed by Sianne Ngai⁹⁴ and Ben Highmore,⁹⁵ both of whom locate aesthetic experience at the intersections of everyday feelings. To quote Ngai's concise summary, while theorists 'continue to attribute the specificity of aesthetic experience to the presence of a single, exceptional emotion' – which is, of course, Kantian disinterested pleasure – 'most of our aesthetic experiences are based on some combination of ordinary ones'.⁹⁶

The idea of an aesthetics based in ordinary feelings does not feel so strange if we return to the original meaning of 'aesthetics', which was more concerned with perception, sensation, and material experience than exclusively with beautiful art. The word stems from the root word 'aesthesia', which was used by the ancient Greeks as an umbrella term for sensual, embodied perception. For Aristotle, aesthesis was 'perception by means of the senses' and formed the boundary between sensory and intellectual interpretation.⁹⁷ Indeed, until the word was appropriated in the service of discourses of taste and morality (such as in Kant's work), aesthetic analysis was more concerned with what Ben Highmore calls the 'messy world of sensate perception'.⁹⁸ Highmore observes that the original meaning of the term retains its integrity in words that refer to particular experiences of integrated sensation: anaesthesia (the deadening of the senses), paraesthesia (pins and needles), synaesthesia (cross-modal sensation), and, of course, kinaesthesia. He suggests that aesthetic inquiry has the potential to be attuned to 'the way that passions and affects circulate across our human and thingly world',⁹⁹ rather than simply a term used for concepts of art and beauty. We can still see traces of this original usage in descriptions from more traditional aestheticians, such as Frank Sibley:

⁹⁴ See Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007); and *Our Aesthetic Categories: Zany, Cute, Interesting* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2012).

⁹⁵ See Ben Highmore, *Ordinary Lives: Studies in the Everyday* (London: Routledge, 2010).

⁹⁶ Ngai, *Our Aesthetic Categories*, p. 44.

⁹⁷ See Collinson, 'Aesthetic Experience', p. 112.

⁹⁸ Highmore, *Ordinary Lives*, p. x.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, xi.

Aesthetics deals with a kind of perception. People have to *see* the grace or unity of a work, *hear* the plaintiveness or frenzy in the music, *notice* the gaudiness of a colour scheme, *feel* the power of a novel, its mood or its uncertainty of tone...the crucial thing is to see, hear, feel.¹⁰⁰

While Sibley places emphasis on the extraordinary features of aesthetic objects, his recognition of the importance of ‘feeling’, similar to Highmore’s use of the words ‘passion’ and ‘affect’, point to the way that aesthetic experience was originally a question of perception and sensation. Our aesthetic analyses of television, then, could gain much from a more historically sensitive approach.

Work on ordinary aesthetics – particularly ordinary aesthetics as a question of embodied perception – also has much to offer television studies. Situated firmly within the routines of everyday life, television has long been thought to offer only distracted modes of attention – what John Ellis influentially terms the ‘glance’ as opposed to the cinematic ‘gaze’ of enraptured attention.¹⁰¹ Yet recent studies in television aesthetics have been more concerned with demonstrating how certain programmes reward attentive engagement. Jason Jacobs argues that ‘the best television routinely demands this kind of [focused] attention’;¹⁰² Jason Mittell suggests that complex narrative television offers specific rewards and pleasures for attentive audiences;¹⁰³ and for Shawn Shimpach, contemporary television ‘has been asking for more and different kinds of attention’.¹⁰⁴ Yet lower-intensity connections with texts persist – and crucially, persist not just in maligned genres, but within the privileged texts of ‘quality’ serial television. In fact, such alternative states are built into the very narratives themselves. Robyn Warhol argues that the repetitive, formulaic nature of serial fiction fosters an ambivalent collection of emotions, including agitation and boredom, as well as more heightened senses of suspense or

¹⁰⁰ Frank Sibley, *Collected Papers on Philosophical Aesthetics*, ed. by John Benson, Betty Redfern, and Jeremy Roxbee Cox (Oxford: Clarendon, 2001), p. 34.

¹⁰¹ John Ellis, *Visible Fictions*.

¹⁰² Jacobs, ‘Issues of Judgement and Value in Television Studies’, p. 431.

¹⁰³ Mittell, ‘Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television’, p. 37.

¹⁰⁴ Shawn Shimpach, *Television in Transition* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 14.

pleasure.¹⁰⁵ It is precisely the *routine* elements of serial narrative that invite such varied responses, reflecting the similarly ambivalent emotions of everyday experience. John Corner rather grudgingly concedes that ‘a certain amount of the humdrum and the routine may be a necessary element’ in television drama, his tone clearly reflecting the entrenched taste formations of traditional aesthetic discourse.¹⁰⁶ Therefore, while John Dewey may argue that the ‘humdrum’ is the enemy of aesthetic experience,¹⁰⁷ and Robin Nelson may define quality serial drama as ‘*not regular* television fare’ (emphasis added),¹⁰⁸ serial television does incorporate the structures and affects of humdrum regularity. Following Schwaab’s belief that ‘the concept of the ordinariness of television could serve as a strategic objective to move into other areas of serial television’,¹⁰⁹ discussions of television aesthetics need to open up the definition of aesthetic responses to incorporate the exhalations of distraction and boredom as well as the indrawn breaths of raptured attention.

The ambivalent patterns of engagement with serial narrative point to another key sticking point in the application of traditional aesthetic theory to television – the question of a bounded textual object. For classical aesthetic theory, the art object is discrete, unchanging, and easily identifiable: what Rebecca West describes as ‘this blazing jewel...this crystalline concentration of glory’,¹¹⁰ and John Dewey as an ‘*isolated*’ object, ‘*cut off*’ from everyday life (original emphasis).¹¹¹ While television aesthetics originally focused on the ephemeral broadcasting context, the increasing distribution of individual

¹⁰⁵ See Warhol, *Having a Good Cry*.

¹⁰⁶ John Corner, ‘Performing the Real: Documentary Diversions,’ *Television and New Media* 3 (2002), 255-269 (p. 262).

¹⁰⁷ John Dewey, *Art As Experience* (New York: Perigee Books, 2005 [1934]), p. 40.

¹⁰⁸ Nelson, *State of Play*, p. 19.

¹⁰⁹ Schwaab, “‘Unreading’ Contemporary Television”, p. 30.

¹¹⁰ West’s full quotation epitomises both the extraordinary nature of the classical aesthetic experience – ‘this blazing jewel that I have at the bottom of my pocket, this crystalline concentration of glory, this deep and serene and intense emotion that I feel before the greatest works of art’ – and its wholeness, for it ‘does not call to any action other than *complete* experience of it. Rather one rests in its lap’ (emphasis added). See Rebecca West, *The Strange Necessity: Essays and Reviews* (London: Jonathan Cape, 1928), p. 195.

¹¹¹ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 3.

programmes on DVD does allow for a greater sense of textual discreteness. Yet as television is sliced into such bounded commodities, the literature has become more and more concerned with its surplus textuality. Will Brooker combines Henry Jenkins' work on media convergence¹¹² with Williams' theory of flow, arguing that televisual textuality stretches beyond the boundaries of the broadcast text in a pattern of 'overflow'.¹¹³ He considers the more literal implications of the vernacular phrase 'to follow a specific show',¹¹⁴ exploring how audiences increasingly *follow* textual threads across multiple media platforms. Matt Hills recognises a similarly unbounded textuality, referring to the iceberg-like 'hyperdiegesis' of cult television, in which the televised text is only a small portion of a massive narrative structure.¹¹⁵ For these authors,¹¹⁶ the broadcast text is simply one part of both the television narrative and our encounter with it, which proliferate in multiple directions: for Brooker, across a horizontal axis of spread, and for Hills, down a vertical one of depth. Television's unwieldy textualities, it seems, pose something of a problem for aesthetic theory's love of a perfect, whole object.

The structure of these massive textual geographies has been elegantly explored in Jonathan Gray's work on paratexts.¹¹⁷ Gray argues that contemporary media texts cannot be understood in isolation from the smaller texts that surround them, such as previews, promotional material, reviews, creator commentary, and fan activity. Paratexts heavily

¹¹² Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006).

¹¹³ See Brooker, 'Living on Dawson's Creek'.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 457.

¹¹⁵ Hills, *Fan Cultures*, p. 98.

¹¹⁶ This line of scholarship also includes Jamie Sexton's discussion of television's 'leaky' and 'porous' boundaries in the age of convergence, John Caldwell's 'second-shift aesthetics' of the dispersed digital environment, and Elizabeth Evans' and Henry Jenkins' work on transmedia television, which explores how television narratives extend across multiple media platforms. See Sexton, 'Television and Convergence,' in *Tele-Visions: An Introduction to Studying Television*, ed. by Glen Creeber (London: BFI, 2006), pp. 160-68; Caldwell, 'Second-Shift Media Aesthetics: Programming, Interactivity, and User Flows', in *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*, ed. by Anna Everett and John T. Caldwell (New York: Routledge, 2003), pp. 127-44; Elizabeth Evans, *Transmedia Television: Audiences, New Media, and Daily Life* (New York: Routledge, 2011); and Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*.

¹¹⁷ Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2009).

influence the audience's construction of meaning by guiding audiences into and out of texts, establishing discursive frames, and fostering a sense of textual presence and attachment. As 'frames and filters' for the other texts they surround,¹¹⁸ paratexts are orienting texts, helping audiences seek out pathways through the complex architecture of television. Importantly, they largely occupy the ordinary, unexceptional spaces of our mediated lives – advertisements on bus shelters, promotions during commercial breaks, creator commentary on Twitter, and so on, scattered across the contemporary mediascape. Paratexts, therefore, invite very ordinary and routine forms of perception and engagement. Our analyses of television need to account for these everyday frames, rather than just focusing on the objects they enclose.

The audience's experience and response to the aesthetic qualities of television can be similarly understood as multiple, dispersed, and fragmentary. Saito makes the excellent point that aesthetic theory always assumes a successful aesthetic experience,¹¹⁹ epitomised by John Dewey's assertion that aesthetic experience is always consummatory, 'run[ning] its course to fulfilment'.¹²⁰ Sarah Cardwell unproblematically quotes David Thorburn's early work on television aesthetics, which suggested that the aesthetic attitude was rare in television because most programs are 'partial achievements, arresting and powerful intermittently'.¹²¹ What Cardwell and Thorburn miss is that such intermittency is a crucial part of the aesthetic (and affective) experience of television, particularly the favoured texts of television aesthetics – serial narrative. John Caughie more usefully recognises this, suggesting that 'the centrality of serialisation seems to me to have a lot to do with what I take to be one of the defining characteristics of television as a domestic technology: its interruptability'.¹²² Sean O'Sullivan's work on serial fiction furthers this point, arguing that the idea of satisfaction is entirely 'antithetical to the structure and

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 3.

¹¹⁹ Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics*, p. 46.

¹²⁰ Dewey, *Art as Experience*, p. 36.

¹²¹ David Thorburn, 'Television as an Aesthetic Medium', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 4 (1987), 161-73 (p. 170).

¹²² John Caughie, *Edge of Darkness* (London: BFI Publishing, 2007), p. 51.

attractions of seriality as a practice.¹²³ The engagement with serial fiction thus unfolds in what he calls, implicitly echoing Jacobs, ‘the language of parts, rather than of wholes’.¹²⁴ Rather than classical aesthetic evaluation, then, serial television might be better suited to an ordinary, everyday, messy, and sensorial form of aesthetic analysis.

In Umberto Eco’s discussion of the relationship between what he calls modern and postmodern aesthetics, he makes the interesting suggestion that ‘when one speaks today of the aesthetics of seriality, one alludes to something more radical’.¹²⁵ It is this ‘something more radical’ that I hope to approach with my theory of televisual kinaesthetics. Kinaesthesia helps bridge the gap between the aesthetics of the everyday and of traditionally valued forms of artistic expression. As the fundamental sense for our navigation through the world, kinaesthesia is embedded in the routine experience of our lives. Yet it is equally involved in more intense moments of aesthetic experience, such as what Ellen Dissanayake refers to as ‘the swooping sensation inside the chest as one watches a dancer leap or a cathedral vault soar’.¹²⁶ Dissanayake here points to the way that aesthetic experience, while classically understood as something that ‘seizes one’s whole mind or imagination’ through a heightened visual experience,¹²⁷ also seizes the primary sensory faculties of the body. Television aesthetics, from Ellis’s glance to Caldwell’s televisuality to McCabe’s aesthetic ‘iconography’,¹²⁸ has always, and almost entirely,¹²⁹ focused on vision as the means of aesthetic perception. Yet by bringing the body back into

¹²³ Sean O’Sullivan, ‘Serials and Satisfaction’, *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 63 (2013), para 2. <<https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/ravon/2013-n63-ravon01450/1025614ar/>>

¹²⁴ Ibid., para 28.

¹²⁵ Umberto Eco, ‘Innovation and Repetition: Between Modern and Postmodern Aesthetics’, *Daedalus*, 134 (2005), 191-207 (p. 203).

¹²⁶ Ellen Dissanayake, *Homo Aestheticus: Where Art Comes from and Why* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1995 [1992]), p. 141.

¹²⁷ Collinson, ‘Aesthetic Experience’, p. 115.

¹²⁸ Janet McCabe, ‘HBO Aesthetics, Quality Television and *Boardwalk Empire*’, in *Television Aesthetics and Style*, ed. by Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 185-197 (p. 196).

¹²⁹ There is a growing body of scholarship on the aesthetics of sound on television, but this still maintains the integrity of the sensory hierarchy, in which sound is a close second to vision. See James Deaville (ed.), *Music in Television: Channels of Listening* (London: Routledge, 2011); Charles Fairchild, ‘Flow Amid Flux: The Evolving Uses of Music in Evening Television Drama’, *Television and New Media*, 12 (2011), 491-512; and Julia C. Obert, ‘Sound and Sentiment: A Rhythmanalysis of Television’, *Continuum*, 22 (2008), 409-417.

a discussion of television aesthetics, a body that senses both the ordinary and the extraordinary, kinaesthesia offers a way to consider television's entanglement between artistic expression and trivial mundanity.

Kinaesthesia also provides a compelling means of understanding the rhythms of contemporary television texts, particularly serial narratives. Work on seriality tends to use metaphors of navigable space: Sean O'Sullivan, for example, argues that serial fiction emerges at the 'crossroads' between the old and the new,¹³⁰ and that to follow a serial is to 'commit to long stretches in this landscape' of the in-between.¹³¹ Similar metaphors are liberally scattered throughout the scholarship on textual overflow. Jenkins describes contemporary television consumers as 'hunters and gatherers, chasing down bits of the story across media channels',¹³² and Gray refers to a paratextual 'realm through which we must travel' in order to consume a text.¹³³ In this sense, rather than the static, fixed position of the disinterested spectator, the television audience always occupies a mobile position. Yet Jenkins notes that we 'do not yet have very good aesthetic criteria for evaluating works that play themselves out across multiple media', or for analysing the extensive textuality of serial television.¹³⁴ Again, I would argue that kinaesthesia goes some way towards addressing this theoretical paucity: attention to the ways in which we make sense of television through questions of movement, rhythm, and corporeality has much to offer the study of these mobile texts.

Kinaesthesia may also offer a corrective to the universalising tendency of aesthetic theory. Helen Piper presents a powerful and rigorous criticism of much of the existing work on television aesthetics, astutely recognising that the call to "attend" to style is a rhetorical Trojan horse to justify the *valorisation* of style'.¹³⁵ In particular, Piper

¹³⁰ Sean O'Sullivan, 'Old, New, Borrowed, Blue: Deadwood and Serial Fiction', in *Reading Deadwood: A Western to Swear By*, ed. by David Lavery (I.B. Tauris, 2006), pp. 115-32 (p. 117).

¹³¹ O'Sullivan, 'Serials and Satisfaction'.

¹³² Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, p. 21.

¹³³ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, p. 36.

¹³⁴ Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, p. 96-7.

¹³⁵ Helen Piper, 'Broadcast Drama and the Problem of Television Aesthetics: Home, Nation, Universe', *Screen*, 57 (2016): 163-183 (p. 166).

criticises Jacobs's move to present the 'universalising' qualities of aesthetics as the proper mode of analysis for the globalised forms of television, noting that such claims to universal appeal are 'not an aspiration but an ideological conceit, a rationalisation of experience that underpins the authority of a certain mode of critical judgement.'¹³⁶ While Piper frames her argument around the need to consider the local and national specificities of television, which remain sites at which television has always and continues to be meaningful, I believe that kinaesthesia may also help us avoid removing a text from its political and cultural context in the name of a larger aesthetic ideal. As I outlined earlier in this chapter, cultural theorists have compellingly used kinaesthesia to unpack and critique particular ideologies of gender, desire, and body politics. Considering the kinaesthetic meanings and pleasures of television, then, goes some way towards fulfilling Piper's call for 'a more catholic understanding of what "aesthetic value" could, but may not yet, include':¹³⁷ the corporeal, the ordinary, the fragmentary, and the specific much more than the universal abstraction of a whole.

Charlotte Brunsdon suggests that due to the domestic, popular nature of the medium, 'an aesthetic of television would...have to be an anti-aesthetic to be adequate to its object and the practices constituting it'.¹³⁸ Indeed, the ordinary, interrupted, dispersed nature of television stands in opposition to the key assumptions of classical aesthetics I have outlined here. Instead of trying to make the medium fit the theory by elevating serial drama to the status of 'quality', it is time to allow aesthetic theory to adapt to the features of television, by returning it to the messy, sensorial, everyday form of perception that it initially was. Yet Brunsdon's notion of an anti-aesthetics maintains a binary distinction between aesthetic evaluation and television, one that leaves this value hierarchy somewhat unquestioned. Instead, I choose to follow John Caldwell's interesting (if casual) suggestion that '*aesthetics* is perhaps the wrong disciplinary arena for television

¹³⁶ Ibid., p. 171.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p. 183.

¹³⁸ Charlotte Brunsdon, *Screen Tastes: Soap Opera to Satellite Dishes* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 216.

scholarship. Perhaps *athletics*...are a better framework' (original emphasis).¹³⁹ Television, it seems, is long overdue for a kinaesthetic mode of analysis. It is overdue for a consideration of how we are invited to make meaning through the kinaesthetic qualities and dynamics of movement and corporeality, ones that play out across our encounters with the vast, dispersed, and messy forms of serial drama.

¹³⁹ Caldwell, *Televisuality*, p. 135.

CHAPTER TWO: THE KINAESTHETICS OF THE VAST NARRATIVE

In the first episode of *Game of Thrones*'s second season, 'The North Remembers' (2:1), Daenerys Targaryen (Emilia Clarke) and her small group of Dothraki are lost in the middle of the desert. She asks her bloodriders to ride out to find the edges of the desert, and what lies beyond:

Daenerys: 'You will ride east, you southeast, and you northeast.'

Rakharo: 'What do we seek,
Khaleesi?'

Daenerys: 'Cities, living or dead.
Caravans and people. Rivers or lakes
or the great salt sea. Find how far
the Red Waste extends before us,
and what lies on the other side.'

Daenerys seeks to map the geographical space of the desert using the moving bodies of her bloodriders. She stands and watches as each of the three riders departs in a different direction. The camera spins slowly around her, taking in each of the riders departing in the background (Figures 2.1-2.3). With such a kinaesthetic plotting of the cardinal directions, *Game of Thrones* suggests that kinaesthesia lies at the heart of the vast narrative landscapes of television: the pivot point around which the narrative spins, and the channel through which the narrative coheres into a whole.



Figure 2.1 Daenerys watches her first bloodrider leave the camp.



Figure 2.2 The camera spins slowly around her as she watches the second rider.



Figure 2.3 Daenerys turns to watch the final rider depart.

This chapter explores the kinaesthetics of contemporary television's vast narratives. The vast narrative, a term coined by Pat Harrigan and Noah Wardrip-Fruin, refers to the massive, sprawling narratives which today make up much of contemporary serial television.¹ These programmes are expansive in terms of the size and scope of their narrative universe, the depth and breadth of their characters, and the extensive spread of their cross-media extensions. The trend towards vastness is not new: it recurs throughout twentieth century literature, from Proust to Joyce to Tolkien, through the earlier work of Balzac, and Dante, and the ancient epics of Greek and Norse mythology. Harrigan and Wardrip-Fruin argue that regardless of the particular time period and medium, vast narrative ambition emerges in response to particular anxieties about art and its relationship to society, and about how to communicate what is perceived as the increasing 'complexity' of modern existence.² In the contemporary televisual landscape, these challenges might be connected to changing production, distribution and viewing habits; namely, the dispersal of the televisual beyond the limits of the set in the living room.

The two programmes I am concerned with in this chapter, *Lost* and *Game of Thrones*, both epitomise the ambitions and anxieties of the vast narrative. *Lost* debuted on US network ABC in September 2004, at a time when commercial networks were dominated by reality programming, and drama was generally not regarded as an attractive or profitable genre. The series revolves around a group of plane crash survivors stranded on a mysterious island. Over its six seasons, it explores both the off-island backstories (and future stories) of the characters as well as their ongoing exploration of the island. *Lost* was a critical and commercial success, and its use of convoluted serial narration and ambitious transmedia storytelling became a blueprint model for many

¹ Pat Harrigan and Noah Wardrip-Fruin, 'Introduction', in *Third Person: Authoring and Exploring Vast Narratives*, ed. by Pat Harrigan and Noah Wardrip-Fruin (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), pp. 1-9 (p. 2).

² *Ibid.*, p. 4.

subsequent series.³ Yet as the series progressed, the vastness of its narrative and paratextual extensions became increasingly unwieldy. Most of the vast narratives airing on television today bear the imprint of *Lost*, both following in its footprints and seeking to diverge from its supposedly wrong turns. The series is thus a key landmark in the development of contemporary serial television, and has much to tell us about the vast narrative's strategies of textual organisation and audience engagement.

Game of Thrones is an adaptation of George R. R. Martin's series of fantasy novels (known as *A Song of Ice and Fire*). The series debuted on HBO in April 2011, and, like *Lost*, seized the attention of audiences and critics alike for its intricate storytelling and high production values. *Game of Thrones* tells the story of the ongoing battle for the Iron Throne of Westeros, combining political intrigue and machinations with bloody medieval wars and fantastical elements. It follows the brand signature of its network by using explicit sex and violence as a marker of quality and complexity.⁴ Like *Lost*, it also uses paratextual and transmedia storytelling elements, although to a slightly lesser degree. The series has a very visible presence within the media, and deliberately aims to present itself as an unmissable blockbuster event. Since 2012 it has consistently topped the yearly lists of the most pirated programmes, a testament to its enduring popularity and position at the forefront of popular culture.

Both series are explicitly concerned with mobility, journeys, travel and orientation. In this, they reflect what Shawn Shimpach describes as an allegorical trend in contemporary serial television, in which the main fantasies and concerns of the text 'underscore their very conditions of production and circulation'.⁵ Consequently, both series provide a compelling site to explore what sorts of reading strategies might be offered by these flagship programmes. I argue that both shows invite an embodied,

³ Programmes that were quite explicitly modelled after *Lost* include *Heroes* (NBC, 2006-2010), *FlashForward* (ABC, 2009-2010), *Once Upon a Time* (ABC, 2011-), *Revolution* (NBC, 2012-2014), *Terra Nova* (Fox, 2010), and *Under the Dome* (CBS, 2013-2015).

⁴ For more on how HBO exploits taboos surrounding the body on screen, see Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, 'Sex, Swearing and Respectability: Courting Controversy, HBO's Original Programming and Producing Quality TV', in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, ed. McCabe and Akass (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 62-76.

⁵ Shawn Shimpach, *Television in Transition* (Malden: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), p. 9.

kinaesthetic reading strategy, something that, in the vast narrative's allegorical orientation, tends to also be narrativised within the series. While this often involves narrative and physical spectacle – such as highly athletic fight sequences or elaborate modes of interactive transmedia storytelling – it also works equally through more ordinary elements of television engagement, such as the intimacy of the familiar and the routine patterns of seriality. Arthur Frank describes the body as both the 'constant in a world of flux, and...the epitome of that flux';⁶ in the expanding horizons of television's vast serial narratives, the body and its sensations similarly act as a point of orientation. Therefore, just as Daenerys kinaesthetically maps the desert, contemporary serial television relies upon the kinaesthetics of the body in motion, a corporeal cartography for the preferred paths and readings through which the audience consumes the text.

Performing Kinaesthesia

To begin exploring our kinaesthetic encounters with the vast narrative, I want to focus on perhaps the most obvious and visible site for such a mode of reading – our engagement with the moving bodies of performers. Discourses of mobility, in both television studies specifically and cultural studies more broadly, are intertwined with questions surrounding performance. Lynn Spigel identifies two organising discourses within television studies: mobility on the one hand, and theatricality on the other.⁷ The bodies of actors, as marked by performative movements, fall perfectly in the overlap between these two discourses. Yet within screen studies, there is a somewhat strange slippage between form and performance, in which the aesthetics of the human body are largely isolated (or left out altogether) from considerations of the other aesthetic properties of the text. Andrew Klevan, in his extensive discussion of film performance, suggests that films that lack a 'dense and rich' *mise-en-scène* must communicate more of

⁶ Arthur Frank, 'For a Sociology of the Body: An Analytical Review', in *The Body: Social Process and Cultural Theory*, ed. by Mike Featherstone, Mike Hepworth and Bryan S. Turner (London: Sage, 1991), pp. 36-102 (p. 40).

⁷ Lynn Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse: Popular Media and Postwar Suburbs* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001), p. 64.

their 'shape and style' through performance.⁸ Here, he makes a problematic distinction between the *mise-en-scène* and the performer, presuming that performance only comes to the foreground in order to rectify the failures of the *mise-en-scène*. A similar argument can be traced within television studies, which too often presumes that television's inherent inability to construct a complex *mise-en-scène* makes performance all the more important for the medium's communicative and affective power. As John Caughie suggests, early television's 'restraint of style' results in a focus on performance, a logical aesthetic for a medium of immediacy and liveness.⁹

This link between television, performance and liveness means that performance on television has tended to be valued more for what it shows us about 'reality' than as a skilled form of artistic labour in its own right. Jane Roscoe refers to the 'flicker of authenticity' in docu-soap performance;¹⁰ Caughie describes 'accidentals', moments in which reality breaks through the illusion;¹¹ and Karen Lury considers the bad performative moments of 'corpsing' as offering a glimpse of the 'truly live'.¹² Each of these theorists draws attention to the fleeting movements of the body, but interprets these as a site through which the contingencies of 'reality' can be glimpsed. This argument maintains a binary distinction between the falsity of the performed self and the deeper, real self that always threatens to erupt onto the surface of the skin. By placing the body and its movements simply as a window through which to see a deeper truth or a more real identity, this line of scholarship maintains a degree of distrust in the materiality of the body.

Sue Turnbull more usefully frames performance as central to our engagement with television in its own right. She suggests that rather than visual aesthetics or

⁸ Andrew Klevan, *Film Performance: From Achievement to Appreciation* (London: Wallflower, 2005), p. 3.

⁹ John Caughie, *Television Drama: Realism, Modernism, and British Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 44.

¹⁰ Jane Roscoe, 'Real Entertainment: New Factual Hybrid Television', *Media International Australia*, 100 (2001), 9-20 (p. 14).

¹¹ John Caughie, 'Telephilia and Distraction: Terms of Engagement', *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 3 (2006), 5-18 (p. 11).

¹² Karen Lury, 'Television Performance: Being, Acting and "Corpsing"', *New Formations*, 27 (1996), 114-27 (p. 127).

production values, it is our 'engagement with the embodied performance of the character which is the basis for...investment in the show'.¹³ To illustrate this point, Turnbull provides a memorable description of Kristen Bell's performance as the eponymous heroine in *Veronica Mars* (UPN, 2004-2006; The CW, 2006-2007).

'The taut, compact figure of Veronica striding towards, or away from, her school locker is one of the iconic punctuation marks in the series, at least in the first two seasons. Her shoulders slightly hunched, her head ducked down as if ready for a fight, her eyes darting sideways, Veronica walks through her world on the alert, and it's a terrific walk, right up there with other iconic screen walks'.¹⁴

With this passage, Turnbull links the kinaesthetic dimensions of Bell's body with the narration of the series – Bell's hunched shoulders and ducked head become part of the grammar through which the narrative communicates to the audience. If narrative television uses the moving bodies of its performers as a site for telling stories, then it follows that we must be asked to read such stories through these bodies. Performance on television is thus a key site through which to begin to trace what I have termed a kinaesthetic reading strategy.

In order to closely analyse television's moving bodies, we can find useful theoretical and terminological precedents in the discipline of dance studies. As discussed in the previous chapter, dance is the art form that is most explicitly and obviously kinaesthetic: both its execution and its reception encourage a merger between form and experience, between sensation and aesthetics. Robert Shane argues that in dance, visually perceived movement makes sense only through its relationship to our bodies,¹⁵ a point Barbara Montero reiterates in her suggestion that we base 'aesthetic judgements about

¹³ Sue Turnbull, 'Moments of Inspiration: Performing Spike', *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, 8 (2005), 367-73 (p. 371).

¹⁴ Sue Turnbull, 'Performing *Veronica Mars*', in *Investigating Veronica Mars: Essays on the Teen Detective Series*, ed. by Rhonda V. Willcox and Sue Turnbull (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2011), pp. 35-48, (p. 40).

¹⁵ Robert Shane, 'Looking and Moving: Kinaesthetic Empathy, Dance and the Visual Arts', *Art Criticism*, 25 (2010), 153-68 (pp. 155-6).

dancers...on the internal experience of movement one has while watching dance'.¹⁶ In dance, movement is not simply a way to communicate traditional aesthetic concepts, but is itself an aesthetic form, and does, in itself, offer an aesthetic experience. To use my own terminology, dance may be the ultimate example of a form that invites a kinaesthetic preferred reading strategy. Dance theory's placement of the kinaesthetics of the body as crucial to the art form's meaning, power, and pleasure thus opens a pathway towards considering the similar meanings and powers of televisual kinaesthetics.

Within dance theory, the close analysis of movement varies according to the particular methodological framework employed. For physiologists, movement is a mechanical, musculoskeletal system of structure and force; for anthropologists, it is a semiotic system of communication; and for phenomenologists, such as Merleau-Ponty, movement is a form of perception, for '[o]ur bodily experience of movement...provides us with a way of access to the world'.¹⁷ None of these theories are necessarily mutually exclusive; in fact, most revolve around a similar set of descriptors, including elements such as direction, force, weight, shape, and rhythm. These descriptors structure the two key categorical systems commonly referenced in dance theory, which I previously outlined in my review of literature: the phenomenological work of Maxine Sheets-Johnstone,¹⁸ and the more physiologically descriptive system of Rudolph Laban.¹⁹ I have chosen to follow Sheets-Johnstone's terminology in my analysis of movement, as her phenomenologically-inflected discussion has more scope for considering the experiential qualities of reading narrative texts. Sheets-Johnstone identifies four key qualities of movement: tension, linearity, amplitude and projection. Tensional qualities refer to the degree of effort and force involved in a movement; linear qualities describe direction and trajectory; amplitudinal qualities are degrees of expansion and contraction; and projectional qualities relate to the patterns in which energy is released. Amplitude and

¹⁶ Barbara Montero, 'Proprioception as an Aesthetic Sense', *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism*, 64 (2006), 231-242 (p. 240).

¹⁷ Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Perception*, trans. by Colin Smith (London: Routledge, 2000 [1962]), p. 162.

¹⁸ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, *The Primacy of Movement* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 1999).

¹⁹ Rudolf Laban, *The Mastery of Movement* (Plymouth: Northcote House, 1950)

linearity are spatial qualities, describing how movement takes shape within space, and tension and projection are temporal qualities, concerned with the rhythms of movement as it unfolds through time. These categories provide a descriptive language for exploring how performance encourages a kinaesthetic reading strategy.

Game of Thrones features particularly elaborate forms of choreographed movement in its many sword fighting scenes, which provide an obvious site for the application of dance analysis. In the first season, Arya Stark (Maisie Williams) attends sword fighting lessons with Braavosi swordsmaster Syrio Forel (Miltos Yerolemou), in order to learn how to use Needle, the sword her brother Jon Snow (Kit Harington) gave her on his departure to the Wall. These lessons are described as ‘dancing lessons’, partly to hide their true purpose from the rest of the court, but also in reference to the particular sword technique that Syrio teaches, which is called ‘water dancing’.

‘This is not the dance of the Westeros we are learning: the knight’s dance, hacking and hammering. This is the Braavos dance. The water dance. It is swift and subtle.’

(Syrio, ‘Lord Snow’, 1:3)

The connection between fight sequences and dance – both of which share complex, staged choreography – is made explicit through Syrio’s words. During this speech, Syrio emphasises his adjectives with his wooden sword. On ‘hacking and hammering’, he slashes his sword horizontally in the middle of the frame, from right to left, then left to right. His sword tears in and out of frame, emphasising both its short temporality and its flexible spatial trajectory. On ‘subtle’, Syrio makes another slash with his sword, but this time, swings it vertically, raising it over his shoulder in an 180° movement from behind his knee to the centre of Arya’s stomach (Figures 2.4-2.5). Despite sharing many of the same dynamics and same shot types as the earlier slash – over-the-shoulder mid-shots – this slash *feels* different, possessing a different kinaesthetic quality. To use Sheets-Johnstone’s terminology, while the tension (or force) of the movement is the same, it possesses a different linear direction and a much more extensive amplitude. The difference between the Westerosi dance and the water dance is thus a question of the qualities of movement:



Figure 2.4 'It is swift...'



Figure 2.5 '...and subtle.'

the water dance uses more expansive movements that exploit a full circular orbit, rather than a perpendicular axis. The Westerosi dance feels blunt, forcefully crashing through the frame; the Braavosi dance is light and nimble, employing more dimensions of the screen space. Therefore, while both movements take place within television's standard compositional aesthetic – mid-shots²⁰ – they are distinguished based on their kinaesthetic qualities. The scene invites us to interpret the difference between Westeros and Braavos through the intricacies of Yerolemou's physical performance, suggesting that its preferred reading must be gleaned through a kinaesthetic awareness.

Claire Perkins acknowledges that television, with its long-standing emphasis on dialogue and conversation, has a particular propensity to pair body movement with dialogue in order to create a kind of 'rhythmic speech'.²¹ Syrio's horizontal slashing movement mimetically matches his use of adjectives – 'hacking and hammering'. He places stress on the first syllables of these words – 'HACK-ing and HAM-mering' – a speech pattern that employs the same identical rhythmic movement of his slashing sword, which emphasises the initial thrust before tapering off in the off-screen space. In contrast, there is a slippage between Syrio's sword movements and his second pair of adjectives, 'swift and subtle'. His downward, swift slash falls on the word 'subtle' (Figure 2.5), and 'swift' is paired with the slow arc of his arm as he sweeps his sword to the side (Figure 2.4). This mismatch between meaning and movement short-circuits the straightforwardly connotations of movement, making televisual speech, as Perkins

²⁰ John Fiske describes the mid-shot as the 'normal camera distance in television'. See *Television Culture* (London: Methuen, 1987), p. 6.

²¹ Claire Perkins, 'Dancing on My Own: *Girls* and Television of the Body', *Critical Studies in Television*, 9 (2014), 33-43 (p. 41).

suggests, a ‘physical, situated activity that signifies beyond linguistic meaning’.²² Rather than the blunt mimesis of the Westerosi dance, the water dance seems more corporeally complex. The swift and subtle nature of the water dance is inferred through our own understanding of what swift and subtle movements might feel like, not a simple correspondence between the words and their visually paired movement. Once again, the meaning this scene is attempting to convey – the cultural difference between Westeros and Braavos – must be read through the kinaesthetic body.

Walking and talking in the vast narrative

While *Game of Thrones*’s water dancing is a spectacular form of choreographed performance, the kinaesthetic interplays between speech and body movement also structure the more ordinary, everyday kinds of action that make up television performance. This is particularly evident in narrative television’s tendency to pair exposition with walking sequences, popularly known as the ‘walk-and-talk’. Most simply, the ‘walk-and-talk’ involves multiple characters conversing while walking towards a destination. Often these are structured as a sort of relay, with particular characters entering and exiting at various points throughout the route. The technique is popularly recognised as the trademark of director Thomas Schlamme, known for his work on *The West Wing* (NBC, 1999-2006), the most quintessential example of the use of the walk-and-talk on television.²³ Schlamme describes the walk-and-talk as the ‘proper visual rhythm’ for expository dialogue.²⁴ Exposition scenes often threaten to halt the flow of a narrative

²² Ibid., p. 41.

²³ Schlamme did not invent the walk-and-talk – it can be seen in many procedural programmes that must find interesting ways of communicating expository dialogue in very familiar sets. Early examples include *The Bill* (ITV, 1984-2010) and *E.R.* (NBC, 1994-2009); more recent programmes include *Parks and Recreation* (NBC, 2009-2015), *House* (Fox, 2004-2012), *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2004-2009), *Scrubs* (NBC, 2001-2008; ABC, 2009-2010), *30 Rock* (NBC, 2006-2013), and, of course, *The Thick of It* (BBC Four, 2005-2007; BBC Two, 2009-2012) and *Veep* (HBO, 2012–). Many of these programmes use the technique self-reflexively or even parodically. Michael Giacchino’s score for *Lost* even includes a piece titled ‘Walk and Talk and Aah!’ (from the episode ‘What They Died For’ 6:16), a humorous reference to the walk-and-talk.

²⁴ Ray Richmond, ‘Finale: West Wing’, *The Hollywood Reporter*, 5 December 2006. See <<http://www.hollywoodreporter.com/news/finale-west-wing-138330>>

and distance the audience. They provide large amounts of information that can often feel artificially delivered, obviously the words of the writer rather than the organic speech of a character. Pairing these sequences with the moving body helps to imbue this dialogue with the quality of the ordinary rather than the excessively writerly, again reflecting Perkins' 'rhythmic speech' of televisual kinaesthetics.

Talk is, of course, central to television broadcasting, shaping the sense of intimacy and everyday familiarity so crucial to the medium. Paddy Scannell, drawing from Edward Hall's work on the proxemics of social interactions, argues that broadcasting's emphasis on talk creates an 'intermediate zone of interpersonal interaction' that reinforces television's liminal position between the public and the private.²⁵ While Scannell's work has been extended by other theorists to think through the relationship between television and talking, most fail to understand that Hall's original conception of proxemics is essentially one of the *bodily* experience of space. Hall suggests that public and private space are formed through the relationship to the body: intimate space is held close to the body, whereas the broader expanses of public space are more divorced from bodily identity, facilitating a degree of anonymity.²⁶ In this sense, the 'intermediate' zone of interaction Scannell links to broadcasting is also a *kinaesthetically* intermediate one, falling between a tight sense of personal space and larger understanding of our body's existence in public space. Consequently, I believe that understanding the dynamics of talking on television must necessarily involve considering their kinaesthetic qualities.

Lost uses elements of the walk-and-talk repeatedly throughout its six seasons. It is perhaps the perfect technique for a show that must find a way to communicate its complex plot and dense character histories while allowing its characters to explore the exotic setting of the island. Most of the walk-and-talks in *Lost* are very simple, yet there are some sequences that aspire to the kind of choreographies seen in *The West Wing*. One example occurs at the beginning of the three-part first season finale, 'Exodus Part One'

²⁵ Paddy Scannell, *Television and the Meaning of Live: An Enquiry into the Human Situation* (Cambridge: Polity, 2014), p. 101.

²⁶ Edward Hall, *The Hidden Dimension* (Garden City, Doubleday and Company, 1969).

(1:23). In this scene, Jack (Matthew Fox) and Locke (Terry O'Quinn) discuss Danielle Rousseau's (Mira Furlan) message as they walk towards the spot on the beach where Michael (Harold Perrineau) is building the raft. Michael and Jack then have a brief discussion about what needs to be completed before the raft can set sail, and Jack leaves to find more people to help them. Jack and Locke's initial dialogue serves to concisely summarise Danielle's character, reminding the audience of previous events (when she destroyed her shelter in 'Numbers' 1:18). Jack's discussion with Michael reminds audiences of the raft's tight launch window (established in the previous episode, 'Born to Run' 1:22), and justifies why the entire ensemble is present for the launching of the raft, which is key to the emotional resonance of the scene. The dialogue is thus entirely expository and not particularly interesting in itself, simply a bridge between the significant events that lie in both the past and future of the highly serialised narrative.

However, while the dialogue may simply seem to be progressing the narrative forward, the moving body of the performers (as emphasised through the movement of the camera) enriches and progresses our understanding of characterisation. Throughout the sequence the camera circles around Jack's shoulders repeatedly, as he moves to talk to other characters (Figures 2.6-2.9). This emphasises his characteristic gait, in which



Figure 2.6 Jack and Locke approach Michael.



Figure 2.7 They walk past the camera.



Figure 2.8 The camera circles around Jack's shoulders.

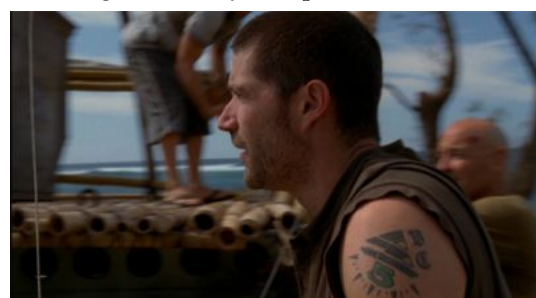


Figure 2.9 The camera follows Jack's movement as Locke remains stationary in the background.

Matthew Fox hunches his shoulders slightly and swings his arms at a distance from his body, creating a stride that reverberates with strength and power. Jack is the pivot point in this walk-and-talk: it is his assertive gait that anchors the camera, kinaesthetically establishing his presence as the leader of the group. The fluid dance between camera and stride gives us access to the pleasures of powerfully and assertively moving through space, reiterating our understanding of Jack's position as leader. Yet as well as supporting exposition and individual characterisation, the walk-and-talk also kinaesthetically establishes the relationships between characters.²⁷ This reflects the particular dynamics of serial narration, in which character development unfolds cumulatively over long periods of time. Locke and Jack's fraught relationship is embodied in the way they never walk or stand quite adjacent to one another. As they approach the raft, Locke is always one step ahead, and he gestures repeatedly in front of Jack's body, preventing him from lengthening his stride (Figures 2.6-2.7). Later, Locke's quiet presence in the background of the shots stands in opposition to Jack's kinaesthetic command of the highly mobile camera (Figure 2.9), again emphasising their highly polarised relationship. Overall, this simple sequence demonstrates how kinaesthetic readings work equally through ordinary moments of everyday movement as much as through spectacular, athletic sequences. A kinaesthetic reading of the scene, focusing on the relationships between form and performance, is ultimately key to understanding (and experiencing) how it communicates information about both plot and characterisation.

Arya Stark's relatable kinaesthetics

Any kinaesthetic reading relies, to some extent, on a feeling of embodied recognition, or familiarity, with the action that unfolds on screen. This does not have to be a strictly mimetic recognition, of course, but simply a comprehension of how an onscreen movement relates to our own repertoire of gestures and experience of movement. The

²⁷ I explore the idea of how television performance unfolds through kinaesthetic relationships between actors in my previously published work on *Orphan Black* (BBC America, 2013-2017). See Shacklock, 'Two of a Kind: Revaluing the Work of Acting Doubles in *Orphan Black*', *Journal of Film and Video*, 69 (2016), 69-82.

idea of familiarity structures two of the key concepts surrounding television in general and television performance in particular: intimacy and reality. In 1974, Horace Newcomb identified intimacy as one of the key aesthetics of television alongside continuity and history; in 2005, he updated the list, replacing the latter two with seriality and liminality, but maintaining the importance of intimacy.²⁸ Televisual intimacy is deeply intertwined with televisual reality, for both revolve around ideas of a direct, unmediated, close connection between the audience and the television screen. Furthermore, in the way it refers to the private and the familiar, televisual intimacy is grounded in the domestic location of the medium. This connection between the real and the intimate – what Kavka and West call the ‘conjunction of immediacy, actuality and intimacy’,²⁹ and what Rhona Berenstein calls television’s ‘illusion of *intimate realism*’³⁰ – has always been an important part of televisual discourse. Berenstein explores how such ontological frameworks shape the way television imagines itself, astutely recognising that such intimacy is perhaps less about the true limits or strengths of the medium than about how and what we perceive them to be. The ways in which we read televisual *intimacy*, then, might be linked to the kinaesthetic interpretative strategies through which we read television itself.

Work on televisual intimacy has tended to separate two meanings of the term: as proximity on the one hand, and as familiarity on the other. In his work on early television drama, Jason Jacobs argues that television’s use of close-ups serves to highlight ‘the hidden small scale life of the dramatic performance’, fostering a sense of intimacy.³¹ He goes on to suggest that the other definition of intimacy – as ‘a familiar pattern’ – only

²⁸ Horace Newcomb, ‘Reflections on TV: *The Most Popular Art*’, in *Thinking Outside the Box: A Contemporary Television Genre Reader*, ed. by Gary Edgerton and Brian Rose (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 2005), pp. 17-36 (p. 30).

²⁹ Misha Kavka and Amy West, ‘Temporalities of the Real: Conceptualising Time in Reality TV’, in *Understanding Reality Television*, ed. by Su Holmes and Deborah Jermyn (London: Routledge, 2004), pp. 136-53 (p. 141).

³⁰ Rhona J. Berenstein, ‘Acting Live: TV Performance, Intimacy, and Immediacy (1945-1955)’, in *Reality Squared: Televisual Discourse on the Real*, ed. James Friedman (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002), pp. 25-49 (p. 33).

³¹ Jason Jacobs, *The Intimate Screen: Early British Television Drama* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 121.

emerges with the rise of the serial narrative.³² Berenstein also draws a link between proximity, intimacy and the close-up, suggesting that television's intimate performance style is organised around the proximate image of the face.³³ And she also identifies the ordinary familiarity of television in a different register, namely its address to consumers in the home.³⁴ Consequently, for both Berenstein and Jacobs, intimacy-as-proximity is linked to the face of the performer, yet intimacy-as-familiarity emerges in the connection between the spaces and rhythms of the home and the serial narrative, thus creating a divide between the televisual body and televisual space. Yet in the kinaesthetics of the vast narrative, the body is always a body in space, for the performing body must be understood as an essential part of the *mise-en-scène*. Therefore, I argue that the intimacy of the body must be understood through *both* a sense of closeness and of ordinariness.

In order to unpack how a kinaesthetic preferred reading strategy negotiates these ideas of the ordinary, the intimate, and the real, I have chosen to focus my discussion on a single case study – Maisie Williams's performance as Arya Stark in *Game of Thrones*. Arya is a clear fan favourite, standing out in a large and often crowded ensemble of characters. In an interview with *Zap2It*, Williams herself responded to Arya's status as fan favourite, suggesting that 'you can't root for her forever, because she's not there to be your favourite character. That's not what she's there for. She's real.'³⁵ Williams's description of Arya as 'real' seems somewhat bizarre, given that Arya is, of course, far from real: she is not only a fictional construct, but one who exists in a fantasy universe and is consistently placed in heightened situations far from what most of us would identify as reality. It is unclear exactly what Williams means by this statement: she goes on to discuss the series of terrible decisions and violent actions that Arya takes, possibly referring to a sense of psychological, emotional realism. However, I believe that Williams' comment is perhaps

³² Ibid., p. 116.

³³ Berenstein, 'Acting Live', p. 40.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 43.

³⁵ Terri Schwartz, "Game of Thrones" Season 4: Maisie Williams says Arya is "not there to be your favourite character", *Zap2It*, 21 March 2014.

<http://www.zap2it.com/blogs/game_of_thrones_season_4_maisie_williams_says_arya_is_not_there_to_be_your_favorite_character-2014-03>

more insightful than it first appears. For there *is* something about Arya that seems particular real, ordinary, and intimate to the audience, which cements her status as a fan favourite character – what I am calling her ‘relatable kinaesthetics’.³⁶

In her performance as Arya, Williams establishes a particularly ordinary, recognisable bodily comportment. She imbues her performance with a sense of tense, coiled energy, and an intermittent rhythm of release and contraction of force. In ‘Winter is Coming’ (1:1), this pattern is exemplified in her shuffling tread as she runs (extremely late) into line to greet the arrival of the royal household. Her father Ned (Sean Bean) seizes her arm to halt her in her tracks, turning her to face him so he can remove the helmet she is wearing. As Bean holds her arm, Williams spins her torso to face him while continuing to scuff and stamp her feet, a juxtaposition of movement that emphasises Arya’s coiled energy. In a similar way, in ‘Lord Snow’ (1:3), she fails to catch the sword that Syrio throws toward her, then rolls her eyes and collects it with a stamping gait. None of these movements are particularly heightened, but are grounded in Arya’s habitual form of bodily expression. In contrast to the elegant lines of Syrio’s movement, Arya’s clumsiness and shuffling, stamping walk are more familiar, appealing to our own everyday struggles against gravity. They are also a marker of her age, clearly recognisable to us as the movements of a fractious, sulky child. In Sheets-Johnstone’s phenomenology of movement, she consistently returns to the idea that movement is fundamental to our ordinary experience of the world, the ‘bedrock of our being and feeling alive’.³⁷ The vast narrative perhaps employs the quality of movement for the same aims, as a means of keeping itself, and its audience, in touch with the intimately familiar world of the everyday. Again, rather than the excessive production values, it is the ordinary, intimate quirks of embodied performance that provide the key site through which we are invited to engage with narrative and character.

³⁶ Such ‘relatable kinaesthetics’ may similarly structure other fan-favourite characters in vast narratives, such as Michael K. Williams’s distinctive loping stride as Omar in *The Wire* (HBO, 2002–2008), or Aaron Paul’s hunched posture as Jesse in *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008–2013).

³⁷ Sheets-Johnstone, *The Primary of Movement*, p. 453.

As well as deriving from a sense of recognition, television's intimacy and familiarity is based in a sense of the mundane, the routine, and the everyday. Television feels familiar to us because it is so often embedded in the routine patterns of our daily lives; as Frances Bonner notes, the 'experience of watching television...[is] very much ordinary and everyday.'³⁸ Consequently, we need to consider how kinaesthetic familiarity might interact with questions of television's routinised patterns of consumption. Earlier in this chapter I discussed Arya's 'dancing lessons' with Syrio, in which she learns how to wield a sword. Interestingly, seasons five and six return to the idea of Arya's kinaesthetic training, as she learns to become a 'Faceless Man' in the House of Black and White in Braavos.³⁹ In the final episode of season five, 'Mother's Mercy' (5:10), Jaqen H'ghar (Tom Wlaschiha) blinds Arya as a punishment for viciously murdering Ser Meryn Trant (Ian Beattie), whose 'life was not yours to take.' Arya spends the first part of season six living as a blind beggar on the streets of Braavos. She is visited repeatedly by the Waif (Faye Marsey), the other young acolyte from the House of Black and White, who gives her a staff and invites her to fight. Arya fails at this task miserably, and spends most of her screentime in 'The Red Woman' (6:1) and 'Home' (6:2) being struck violently with the staff. In 'Oathbreaker' (6:3), she returns to the House of Black and White and finally masters the art of blind sparring, and her sight is restored. The narrative that runs through these episodes is something of a training narrative, as Arya must learn how to fight without vision in order to return to the Faceless Men's fold.

Even though this story arc only took three episodes, fans and critics quickly became impatient with it. The *Los Angeles Review of Books*'s Sarah Mesle complained 'How could that ARYA BECOMES AN ASSASSIN plot line possibly have become so dull?!';⁴⁰ *Vulture*'s Jen Chaney complains that she is 'over...watching poor, blind Arya Stark

³⁸ Frances Bonner, *Ordinary Television* (London: Sage, 2003), p. 31.

³⁹ The Faceless Men are a guild of assassins, who renounce their identities to become 'no one'. This allows them to more effectively assume disguises in their work, but also to better serve the 'Many-Faced God', the god of death.

⁴⁰ Aaron Bady and Sarah Mesle, 'Game of Thrones: Season 6, "Book of the Stranger"', *Los Angeles Review of Books*, May 16 2016. <https://lareviewofbooks.org/article/game-thrones-season-6-book-stranger/>

attempting to kick the ass of thin air’;⁴¹ and *The A.V. Club*’s Brandon Nowalk suggests that watching Arya get beaten in the face is ‘a lot more painful than the producers seem to get.’⁴² For each of these critics, watching Arya’s repeated defeat is dull, tedious, and painful. I would agree – the sequences are unpleasant and somewhat tedious, leaving me impatient for her storyline to move on. However, I believe that this is perhaps the *preferred* reading of these sequences, rather than a failure of the show. Training the body is tedious, repetitive, and largely dull. While the final result of the training may be anything but ordinary – a spectacular, lithe, and athletic body – the *process* of training is a very ordinary, everyday experience of repetition and incremental gain. Nowalk describes these sequences as ‘painful’, and I would argue that this is exactly how they are intended to be read: as a painful process of physical transformation. The dullness of these sequences emerges precisely from how they speak to the everydayness of corporeal existence, again suggesting that Arya’s characterisation always operates through her relatable kinaesthetics.

In ‘Oathbreaker’ (6:3), Arya returns to the House of Black and White, and finally masters the skill of blind sparring. This is shown through a montage in which the Waif constantly strikes Arya with her staff while questioning her about her past. The use of a training montage is a common staple in sports and action films,⁴³ and again reflects the kinaesthetic dullness of body work. Rather than the upbeat pop song that usually accompanies training montages, however, this sequence is choreographed according to the dialogue: the Waif hits Arya whenever she is caught in a lie. This again reflects the particular link between dialogue and the body in television’s kinaesthetic reading strategies. As Arya lists her brothers, quick jump cuts pair different shots of Arya receiving blows from the Waif. On ‘Robb’, Arya takes a swift sweep to the neck; on ‘Bran’,

⁴¹ Jen Chaney, ‘*Game of Thrones* Recap: Eyes Wide Open’, *Vulture*, May 2, 2016.

<<http://www.vulture.com/2016/05/game-of-thrones-recap-season-6-episode-2.html>>

⁴² Brandon Nowalk, ‘The blasts from the past continue on a moodier *Game Of Thrones* (newbies)’, *The A.V. Club*, May 8 2016. <<http://www.avclub.com/tvclub/blasts-past-continue-moodier-game-thrones-newbies-236432>>

⁴³ The most obvious examples of training montages occur in 1980s films such as *Rocky* (John G. Avildsen, 1976) and *Kickboxer* (Mark Di Salle, 1989).

she falls to her knees after being hit in the stomach, and on 'Rickon', the Waif strikes her ankles and knocks her feet out from under her. This sequence emphasises that while Arya might be gaining a particular degree of physical skill, she is losing her identity as Arya Stark; indeed, the whole point of the training is to become a Faceless Man, or 'no one'. Yet in becoming 'no one', she is not simply losing her passion, her anger, and her links to her family, but the very thing that makes her Arya for the audience – her relatable kinaesthetics. Arya's increased skill at fighting blind is paired with her ability to answer the Waif's questions correctly, in which she stands to attention, still and unmoving, lacking any sense of the restless tension that has imbued her performance in the earlier seasons.

By the end of season six, Arya has rejected the cult of the House of Black and White and returned to identifying as Arya Stark. Once again, we are encouraged to read this story kinaesthetically, most obviously in an action sequence from episode eight, 'No One' (6:8). In this sequence, the Waif chases Arya through the streets of Braavos, culminating in an off-screen fight in which Arya kills her. Arya runs through the streets with her characteristic movement profile, all flailing arms and uneven steps (Figure 2.10). In contrast, the Waif runs powerfully, keeping her arms close to her body and powering her legs evenly (Figure 2.11). At one point, Arya slides under a wagon on a set of stairs, falling to the ground and skidding face first down the steps (Figures 2.12-2.13). The Waif cleanly vaults over the top, landing evenly on both feet on the other side (Figures 2.14-2.15). The contrast between these two movement profiles – Arya's uneven tension and wide amplitude of movement, versus the Waif's controlled and contained movements – serves to guide our identification in this sequence, and reiterates Arya's identity as *Arya* once more (rather than 'no one'). The impact and meaning of this sequence emerges from both the aesthetic features of the body in motion and the ways it makes the audience feel: Arya's less controlled movements not only tells us that Arya Stark has returned, but invites us to empathise with her more relatable, less polished movements. The painful experience of watching Arya's training thus ensures that we feel her triumph in



Figure 2.10 Arya runs through the streets with a wide, uncontrolled amplitude.



Figure 2.11 The Waif powers her movement evenly with a tight centre of gravity.



Figure 2.12 Arya slides awkwardly under a wagon...



Figure 2.13 She rolls messily down the stairs and lands on her face.



Figure 2.14 The Waif leaps elegantly over the top of the wagon...



Figure 2.15 She lands perfectly and evenly on both feet.

reclaiming her identity all the more powerfully. Again, we are invited to interpret these affective and narrative elements precisely through the kinaesthetics of the scene, kinaesthetics that manifest as both the formal features of performance and our capacity to read them through our own embodied experience.

The Vast Narrative as a Navigable Space

My discussion of Arya has largely revolved around her emotional and narrative journey throughout the (at the time of writing) seven seasons of *Game of Thrones*.

However, there is a more obvious journey that underpins these serial developments: the geographical journey Arya takes throughout the Known World, from the North to King's

Landing, to Harrenhal and the Twins, and finally across the Narrow Sea to Braavos. In my review of literature I suggested that kinaesthesia involves an articulation between bodies and spaces; consequently, any discussion of the mobility of individual bodies must also consider how those bodies express and communicate particular spatial experiences. The vast narrative uses the dimensions of the body in motion – the fighting body, the walking body, the body in training – for particular narrative purposes, purposes which derive from the longstanding connections between the medium, performance, and ideas of intimacy and the everyday. Yet like Arya’s narrative, such kinaesthetics of performance are supported by another longstanding relationship at the core of the medium, one which relates to spatial experience: the connection between television and travel.

The discourse of travel has characterised all eras of television programming, promotion, and scholarship. As the quintessential ‘window on the world’, offering the medium’s definitive ‘seeing at a distance’, television both brings the world into the living room and invites the audience to travel beyond it, seemingly transcending the limitations of space. In her elegant work on television advertising in the 1950s and 1960s, Lynn Spigel demonstrates how these advertisements imagined the set through images of portability (such as suitcases and rockets), catering to the fantasy of leaving the home.⁴⁴ Raymond Williams, writing in the mid-1970s, suggests that television reiterates what he terms ‘mobile privatisation’: the experience of travel within a safe, enclosed space.⁴⁵ As Milly Buonanno neatly summarises, it seems that the experience of “watching television” corresponds not only to seeing far, but also and perhaps above all to “going far”.⁴⁶ For all of these theorists, the tension between seeing and going, embedded within the word television itself, finds release through discourses of mobility and dreams of travel.

Yet most accounts of television’s travel discourses consider only the symbolic implications of the movement of travel. Samuel Weber suggests that television’s ‘seeing-at-a-distance’ promises both the traversal of space and the transcendence of ‘the spatial

⁴⁴ Spigel, *Welcome to the Dreamhouse*, p. 60.

⁴⁵ Raymond Williams, *Television: Technology and Cultural Form* (London: Fontana, 1974).

⁴⁶ Milly Buonanno, *The Age of Television: Experiences and Theories* (Bristol: Intellect, 2008), p. 17.

limitations placed by the body upon seeing and hearing'.⁴⁷ Here, he positions the body as a departure point, something soon left behind on the televisual journey. Buonanno more explicitly places a caveat on the travelling television audience, stating that the televisual experience of 'going far' is 'not so much [one] of transport in the true sense of the word',⁴⁸ but one of 'symbolic and imaginary movements'.⁴⁹ Such reservations are echoed in Shaun Moores's description of television consumption as an experience of 'simultaneously staying home and, *imaginatively at least*, going places' (emphasis added),⁵⁰ again seeking to dampen the strength of the link between television and travel. The defensive boundaries these scholars place on the relationship between television and travel points to a deep tension at the heart of televisual kinaesthetics: the degree to which television's movement sensations can be regarded as 'real', material, and directly accessible.

While I concede that the body does not physically move to a new geographical area through watching television, I reject the idea that televisual experiences of travel can be easily be dismissed as allegorical or metaphorical. Here I follow Misha Kavka's work on televisual realities, in which she argues that our engagement with television should be seen neither as a form of direct access to a 'reality' or bracketed as vicarious, second hand or imaginative, but as what she calls an 'affective reality'.⁵¹ She describes television as 'technology of affect',⁵² and suggests that the affects it produces 'must be taken as real at the site at which they are experienced'.⁵³ With Kavka's framework in mind, I believe that the travel experiences offered by television can and must be understood as real experiences, in terms of how they shape our understanding and experience of space.

⁴⁷ Samuel Weber, *Mass Mediauras: Form, Technics, Media* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1996), p. 115.

⁴⁸ Buonanno, *The Age of Television*, p. 103.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 105.

⁵⁰ Shaun Moores, 'Television, Geography, and "Mobile Privatisation"', *European Journal of Communication*, 8 (1993), pp. 365-79 (p. 365).

⁵¹ Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), p. 27.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 36. The antecedents to Kavka's argument can be traced through earlier work on television and affect, namely Ien Ang's foregrounding of 'emotional realism' in the pleasures of fans of *Dallas*. See *Watching Dallas: Soap Opera and the Melodramatic Imagination*, trans. by Della Couling (London: Methuen, 1985), p. 45.

Here, I follow the work of theorists such as Joshua Meyrowitz, who argues that television transforms our experience of locality to include people and places beyond our immediate physical proximity.⁵⁴ For Meyrowitz, location and community are no longer understood 'as the centre of all our experiences but as a place north of, west of...a number of other places'.⁵⁵ Meyrowitz's use of the cardinal directions here implies that this multiple sense of space is precisely a *navigable* space, again reiterating my belief that television's link to travel very materially changes our experience of space.

Within cultural theory, there has been a decisive shift away from understanding space as something in which objects and events are embedded, towards seeing it as a mobile, culturally constructed, lived experience. Henri Lefebvre argues that space must be understood as something that is *produced* and *practiced*, and thus is always grounded in the experience of a particular cultural context.⁵⁶ Such an understanding of space will, he suggests, 'restore unity to what abstract space breaks up...the integrity of the individual body'.⁵⁷ Lefebvre here places the experience of body as central to the ways in which we understand space. While Lefebvre is largely concerned with social space, Lev Manovich takes a similarly mobilising view towards media space, arguing that new media presents 'navigable space' as the dominant cultural form. 'Rather than only considering topology, geometry, and logic of a static space', he argues, 'we need to take into account the new way in which space functions in computer culture: as something *traversed by a subject, as a trajectory rather than an area*' (emphasis added).⁵⁸ Once again, space becomes something that unfolds and is constructed through the activity and movement of its users. There are echoes of my own argument in Manovich's words: the idea that space might be expressed and encountered through both formal features and the way it is experienced.

Consequently, I believe that the vast narrative's kinaesthetic reading strategies invite us to

⁵⁴ Joshua Meyrowitz, 'Media and Community: The Generalised Elsewhere', *Critical Studies in Mass Communication*, 6 (1989), 326-334.

⁵⁵ Ibid., p. 327.

⁵⁶ Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. by Donald Nicholson-Smith (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 52.

⁵⁸ Lev Manovich, *The Language of New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2001), p. 279.

read space as something to be traversed or practiced, rather than simply an objective container. In other words, it asks us to read space *through the body*, existing only through the ways in which it is practiced and experienced.

Game of Thrones and *Lost* both employ their title sequences to emphasise the importance of navigable space. Jonathan Gray describes title sequences as ‘offering “proper interpretations” of genre and character’,⁵⁹ suggesting that their weekly repetition works to ‘reaffirm what a show is about, how its characters are related, and how we “should” make sense of them.’⁶⁰ These sequences clearly offer the preferred reading strategies for particular programmes, and so stand as a crucial site of analysis for my project. The title sequence of *Game of Thrones* very obviously uses navigation as a



Figure 2.16 The city of Vaes Dothrak at a 90° angle to the rest of the map of Westeros.



Figure 2.17 *Lost*'s disorienting opening credits.

structuring principle. It introduces the geography of The Known World, travelling across the surface of a map of Westeros and Essos. With each location, the travelling camera pauses, allowing the site to spring up from the two-dimensional map into a moving, three-dimensional form, much like an elaborate pop-up book. By explicitly inviting us *into* the world of the narrative – from two to three dimensions - the sequence presents the space of the narrative as something to be travelled and explored, not simply a static image. Importantly, the locations depicted in the sequence change every week, depending where the action of the particular episode takes place. While title sequences for long-running television programmes are often updated between seasons, to reflect changes in cast or

⁵⁹ Jonathan Gray, *Show Sold Separately: Promos, Spoilers, and Other Media Paratexts* (New York: New York University Press, 2009), p. 74.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 76.

narrative, it is extremely rare for a sequence to change with every episode.⁶¹ Once again, this clearly invites the audience to read the programme as an experience of travel, giving us the directions we will need to navigate the narrative of the particular episode.

Yet this is not simply a question of *visual* orientation. Rather, it also encourages an experience of *embodied* spatiality. Towards the end of the sequence, we travel across the Narrow Sea to the Dothraki Sea and Vaes Dothrak. This region is positioned on its side, at a 90° angle to the representation of the other cities (Figure 2.16). It is practically impossible to read the names of the places on first viewing, and difficult to do so at all without turning your head. The Dothraki lands are thus explicitly invited to be read through a very embodied experience of inversion. This sets up a disjunction between the cities of Westeros and the ‘sideways’ world of the Dothraki, signalling the ‘otherness’ and remove of that culture. The relationship between Westeros and the lands on the other side of the Narrow Sea is thus kinaesthetically comprehended, a space that must be experienced through the embodied dynamics of navigation.

In contrast, *Lost*’s opening credits are fifteen seconds of pure disorientation. They begin with a black screen and a moment of silence, before the word ‘LOST’ appears in the centre: out of focus, on an angle, and spinning clockwise towards the audience (Figure 2.17). The soundtrack consists of a hum of increasing volume, before tapering off into a series of discordant high-pitched notes with no discernible rhythm. In 2004, when most television dramas continued to use lengthy musical montages of actors in their title sequences, the minimalism of *Lost*’s opening titles clearly signalled something new. Gray specifically highlights *Lost*’s simple sequence as a ‘refus[al] to pin down a broader sense of genre, character and theme’,⁶² yet misses the fact that this refusal is, in itself, a perfect introduction to the programme. While it may not present representational content, such as character, setting, and plot, it perfectly evokes the *experience* of the narrative – the

⁶¹ There are a few exceptions: the survivor count in the title sequence of *Battlestar Galactica* is updated every week to reflect the deaths that have occurred in the narrative, and the title sequences in the first half of *Doctor Who*’s (BBC One, 2005–) seventh sequence grew progressively darker in colour and tone, leading up to the deaths of companions Amy Pond (Karen Gillan) and Rory Williams (Arthur Darvill)

⁶² Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, p. 74.

experience of being lost. I am always struck by how effectively this sequence draws me into the narrative world, making me feel as though I am falling into a space where my familiar coordinates and reference points no longer apply. There are no maps by which to travel through the world of *Lost*, the sequence tells me, there is only the feeling of moving into the unknown. Rather than a particular set of coordinates or geometry, the space of *Lost* is an *experience* of navigation (or a practice of disorientation), one in which we are unsure of exactly where it is we are going. In this sense, just like *Game of Thrones*, the title sequence invites us to read the series through the kinaesthetic experience of navigable space, a space that, as Manovich suggests, can only be ‘mapped out by moving through it’.⁶³

Of course, I do not move my body into the world of *Lost*. Yet to some degree, perhaps I do. Margaret Morse, in her discussion of the rise of moving television graphics (including flying letters similar to the *Lost* titles), suggests that when watching such flying graphics ‘[w]e are meant to feel that we...break through “bodily” into a story-world’.⁶⁴ Morse here seems to identify a kinaesthetic reading strategy embedded within all television graphics. Such flying letters and logos ask us to experience space as an embodied movement, or a bodily navigation, through the ways in which they play with our corporeal understanding of movement through space. Following Morse, I would argue that the feelings of navigation, of disorientation, and of travel that I feel when watching the *Lost* credits are real bodily experiences, experiences that are specifically cued by the formal features of the sequence themselves. While I may not actually fall into the world of *Lost*, I am invited to read the diegetic space of the programme as a practice of navigation, a reading heightened by the particular formal properties of image, sound, and graphics. Once again, the meaning of these title sequences emerges specifically from the connection between form and experience, between visual aesthetics and embodied sensation – a connection that, as I have argued, needs to be understood as kinaesthetic. By

⁶³ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, p. 245.

⁶⁴ Margaret Morse, *Virtualities: Television, Media Art, and Cyberculture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998), p. 83.

deliberately drawing attention to the kinaesthetics of navigable space in their credits, then, contemporary television's vast narratives again present kinaesthetic readings as their preferred mode of encounter.

Media tourism and navigable space

While I have argued that such experiences of space as navigable terrain are *real* experiences, it is undeniable that experiencing navigable space in front of a screen operates in a different register to more traditional forms of travel. However, in setting up such preferred reading strategies, the vast narrative naturally encourages more overtly performative, or literal, engagements with navigable space. If we are invited to read a vast narrative as a kinaesthetic experience of spatial navigation, as an experience of travel that remains phenomenologically and affectively real, is it any wonder that we might wish to perform these readings in more explicitly kinaesthetic ways? We can begin to explore this through the rise of media-induced tourism, something often linked to the vast narrative.⁶⁵ In what follows, I argue that media tourism needs to be understood as an overt manifestation of the deeper relationships that exist between screen media, the body, and kinaesthetic experiences of travel and movement.

Much like the vast narrative, tourism is a particular form of seeing grounded in a mobile experience of space. Alfio Leotta sees cinema and tourism as providing different answers to the same question of desire for temporal and spatial mobility;⁶⁶ Giuliana Bruno suggests that film and tourism both revolve around the 'practice of spatial consumption';⁶⁷ and Robert Fish notes that we cannot discuss television without recourse to the language of tourism – 'travel, visit, movement, escape, displacement,

⁶⁵ Other television programmes that have inspired thriving tourism industries include *Breaking Bad*, *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007), *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004), *Broadchurch* (ITV, 2013-2017), *Outlander* (Starz, 2014-) and *Downton Abbey* (ITV, 2010-2015). Not all of these programmes can be classified as 'vast narratives', but all show some characteristics of the category.

⁶⁶ Alfio Leotta, *Touring the Screen: Tourism and New Zealand Film Geographies* (Bristol: Intellect, 2011), p. 1.

⁶⁷ Giuliana Bruno, *Atlas of Emotion: Journeys in Art, Architecture and Film* (New York: Verso, 2002), p. 62.

abandonment'.⁶⁸ And much like the vast narrative, tourism is seen as caught between notions of authenticity and inauthenticity, or the question of reality: Dean MacCannell argues that tourism is essentially a search for the authentic,⁶⁹ whereas Maxine Feifer's notion of 'post-tourism' recognises that tourist experiences are always already mediated.⁷⁰ Consequently, I believe it is productive to consider how the tourist imagination of the vast narrative intersects with the kinaesthetic reading strategies of the vast narrative.

Both *Lost* and *Game of Thrones* rely heavily on spectacular images of travel across a landscape. The programmes use repeated helicopter, drone, and crane shots of groups of bodies making slow progress across hills and plains. These images do function as signs of status, highlighting the high budgets necessary for difficult location shooting. However, in privileging the landscape, they also directly draw attention to the source of such funding. *Game of Thrones* receives funding from Invest Northern Ireland, the country's economic development agency, and *Lost* was produced with support from the Hawai'i Film Office. In his work on the economics of *Lost*'s production, Julian Stringer describes the series as the most 'ambitious, imaginative and compelling audio-visual postcard O'ahu has ever dispatched', and concludes that the Film Office would have hoped to use *Lost* as a lure for both tourists and future media productions.⁷¹ In a similar way, Northern Ireland's First Minister Peter Robinson stated that *Game of Thrones* was 'proof that Northern Ireland can host large-scale productions with positive spin-off into other sectors such as tourism'.⁷² The two series' use of landscape clearly evokes traditionally aesthetic form of touristic visual consumption, appealing to what Helen Wheatley refers to as 'a contemplative

⁶⁸ Robert Fish, 'Mobile Viewers: Media Producers and the Televisual Tourist', in *The Media and the Tourist Imagination: Converging Cultures*, ed. by David Crouch, Rhona Jackson and Felix Thompson (Abingdon: Routledge, 2005), pp. 119-34 (p. 119).

⁶⁹ Dean MacCannell, 'Staged Authenticity: Arrangements of Social Space in Tourist Settings', *American Journal of Sociology*, 79 (1973), pp. 589-603.

⁷⁰ Maxine Feifer, *Going Places: The Ways of the Tourist from Imperial Rome to the Present Day* (London: Macmillan, 1985).

⁷¹ Julian Stringer, 'The Gathering Place: *Lost* in Oahu', in *Reading Lost*, ed. by Roberta Pearson (London: I.B. Tauris, 2009), pp. 73-93 (p. 88).

⁷² "'Game of Thrones' fourth series to be filmed in NI", *BBC News*, 3 April 2013.
<<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-northern-ireland-22010843>>

viewer or potential tourist watching beautiful images in spectacular clarity'.⁷³ Yet Wheatley's use of the phrase 'potential tourist' emphasises an important point: the aesthetic value of these images cannot be understood in isolation from their broader *kinaesthetics*, or how they encourage us to read them through movement. In deciding to invest in such television productions, these official funding bodies take for granted the power of television's connection between seeing and going, and the *real* power of the navigable spatial experiences the programmes encourage.

To some extent, all tourism is media-induced tourism – tourist destinations have always been chosen and experienced through mediatisation, from the Romantic Grand Tour to contemporary cinema tourism.⁷⁴ Yet the power of television programmes to act as what Sue Beeton terms “pull” factors for tourism destinations⁷⁵ is heightened through the rapport between its touristic imagination and its kinaesthetic reading strategies. In particular, these two interpretative structures collide at the intersection between authenticity and inauthenticity. For tourism scholar Dean MacCannell, authenticity exists as both a feeling and a form of knowledge, and while much tourism discourse focuses on the objective authenticity of the latter, it is the former that is dominant in tourism experiences.⁷⁶ However, while he rather pejoratively dismisses this as a kind of false consciousness – in which tourists know that a staged experience is not real, but submit nonetheless – we can see what we might call 'experiential authenticity' as a productive part of tourism. Ning Wang, extending MacCannell's argument, recognises that while the tourist feeling may be a 'fantastic feeling', it is '*real* to a tourist and thus accessible to him or her in tourism'.⁷⁷ Wang's argument aligns perfectly with Kavka's work on affective realities, in which objective ideas of reality matter less than affective experiences. Consequently, I argue that the feelings of the tourists as bodies in space are

⁷³ Helen Wheatley, *Spectacular Television: Exploring Televisual Pleasure* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), p. 148.

⁷⁴ Sue Beeton, *Film-Induced Tourism* (Clevedon: Channel View Publications, 2005), p. 4.

⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 8.

⁷⁶ MacCannell, 'Staged Authenticity', p. 596.

⁷⁷ Ning Wang, 'Rethinking Authenticity in Tourism Experience', *Annals of Tourism Research*, 26 (1999), 349-70 (p. 360).

the true site of authenticity in the tourism experience. Regardless of the staging of a touristic encounter, the tourist generally comprehends the authenticity of their experience through the fact of their body's location within and movement through a particular space. Like in the vast narrative, then, it is the kinaesthetics of tourism that provide much of the meaning, affect, and authenticity of the experience.

In March 2015, I visited Belfast with the aim of participating in some 'media-induced tourism' of my own – namely, joining some of the *Game of Thrones* tours that travel to various shooting locations in Northern Ireland.⁷⁸ During each location stop on the tour, our guide would invite volunteers to help him act out the corresponding scenes from the series (Figure 2.18). While some members of my party were more enthusiastic about this task than others, we were generally only directed to stand in a certain place or walk a certain path, not to emote or recite dialogue. In this sense, the performance was



Figure 2.18 Acting out scenes from *Game of Thrones* on location.

predominantly one of the *body in space*. By inviting us to re-enact the scenes from the series, and hence connect to the narrative through the replication of the body's position in space, our guide essentially asked us to make an explicit kinaesthetic connection between ourselves and the text, again placing kinaesthesia as key mode of engagement with both tourism and television.⁷⁹ Claudia Bell and John Lyall identify a kinaesthetic trend within

⁷⁸ There is a strong precedent of such autoethnographic research and reflection within media tourism studies. See Kim Akass and Janet McCabe, 'Carried Away in Manhattan', in *Reading Sex and the City*, ed. Akass and McCabe (London: I.B. Tauris, 2004), pp. 234-236; and Ross Garner, 'Symbolic and Cued Immersion: Paratextual Framing Strategies on the *Doctor Who* Experience Walking Tour', *Popular Communication*, 14 (2016), 86-98.

⁷⁹ We can see a similar trend in other instances of fan pilgrimage. Recently, the creator of *Breaking Bad*, Vince Gilligan, had to appeal to fans to stop re-enacting one of the iconic scenes from the series, in which Walter White, in a moment of frustration, throws a pizza onto the roof of his house. Fans were travelling to the house used as the exterior in Albuquerque and attempting to toss pizzas onto its roof, much to the displeasure of its residents. Importantly, the appeal of this scene is entirely based in its kinaesthetics: Cranston angrily flings the box in the air, and the pizza

contemporary tourism, arguing that what was once focused around visual consumption now tends to involve more kinetic experiences: in their words, a 'kinaesthetic interrogation of a landscape'.⁸⁰ The *Game of Thrones* tour invited a similar kinaesthetic interrogation of the landscape, asking us to connect our touristic and television experiences through the kinaesthetic authenticity of being a body in space.

After explaining the context surrounding the particular location, our guide would show the corresponding clip from the series on an iPad, holding it aloft while the group crowded around to watch. Will Brooker, describing his own fan pilgrimage to Los Angeles in pursuit of *Blade Runner*, suggests that there is always a slippage between the location on screen and the real-world location, in that we can never quite occupy the diegetic world of the narrative.⁸¹ He draws from Roger C. Aden's work on fan pilgrimages to argue for the importance of homecoming in the pilgrimage experience. On returning home, we compare our own experience to that of the mediated images of the primary text, allowing a 'reality effect' to seep into the diegesis.⁸² However, viewing the primary text on the iPad on location somewhat short-circuits this cycle, as the relationship between text and location becomes layered and doubled. This is exacerbated by the use of the iPad, a familiar technology to most of us, and something we may well have used to watch *Game of Thrones* ourselves. Interestingly, Bell and Lyall see contemporary technologies such as the video camera as both inspiring and promoting the kinaesthetic consumption of the landscape;⁸³ accordingly, we can suggest that the technology of the iPad feeds into the kinaesthetic consumption of the location. Our guide would usually hold the screen in

glides out and lands perfectly on the roof. Watching the scene is akin to watching a perfect goal, a kinaesthetic satisfaction heightened by the paratextual knowledge that Cranston managed the feat perfectly on the first take.

⁸⁰ Claudia Bell and John Lyall, 'Accelerated Sublime: Thrill-Seeking Adventure Heroes in the Commodified Landscape', in *Tourism: Between Place and Performance*, ed. by Simon and Mike Crang Coleman (New York: Berghahn, 2002), pp. 21-37 (p. 30).

⁸¹ Will Brooker, 'The *Blade Runner* Experience: Pilgrimage and Liminal Space', *The Blade Runner Experience: The Legacy of a Science Fiction Classic*, ed. by Will Brooker (Wallflower Press: London, 2005), pp. 1-30.

⁸² Ibid., p. 28. See also Roger C. Aden, *Popular Stories and Promised Lands: Fan Cultures and Symbolic Pilgrimages* (Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press, 1999).

⁸³ Bell and Lyall, 'The Accelerated Sublime', p. 30.

front of the correct angle to the landscape, diffusing the borders of the iPad into the vastness of the landscape. The familiar sight of the screen becomes juxtaposed against the location site, yet the body's orientation to both remains consistent. Therefore, while Brooker may see the reality effect as feeding into the diegesis, here, it links the screen encounter with the vast narrative and the touristic encounter with the location into a shared relationship between body and space, an affective reality of kinaesthetic engagement. The ability to watch the episode on location thus explicitly calls attention to the kinaesthetic imagination of text itself.

Navigating paratexts: promotions and sensations

One of the defining characteristics of the vast narrative is its inability to remain within the boundaries of a single text, spreading and sprawling across multiple texts and sites. To some extent, we can see this as another manifestation of its kinaesthetic reading strategy. In constructing a narrative that demands to be read through ideas of movement, travel, and navigable space, it makes sense that the vast narrative itself must be pieced together by navigating multiple textual nodes, or what Harrigan and Wardrip-Fruin refer to as extensive 'cross-media universes'.⁸⁴ Daniel Chamberlain argues that there has been a shift in the dominant spatial paradigm of late modernity, towards a new 'networked media space',⁸⁵ an argument that chimes neatly with Manovich's idea of navigable space. This network is formed firstly, through the general paratexts that surround any television programme; and secondly, through the more interactive elements of transmedia storytelling, or the increasingly common practice of employing multiple media formats and texts in the service of a fictional universe, which tends to be specifically associated with vast narratives.⁸⁶ While not all paratexts are explicitly involved in transmedia

⁸⁴ Harrigan and Wardrip-Fruin, *Third Person*, p. 2.

⁸⁵ Daniel Chamberlain, 'Media Interfaces, Networked Media Spaces, and the Mass Customisation of Everyday Space', in *Flow TV: Television in the Age of Media Convergence*, ed. by Michael Kackman, Marnie Binfield, Matthew Thomas Payne, Allison Perlman and Bryan Sebok (New York: Routledge, 2011), pp. 13-29.

⁸⁶ Transmedia techniques can be seen in cinema texts (the Marvel universe unfolds across films, television, and comics); video games (*Assassin's Creed*, *Dragon Age*, and *Mass Effect* all employ novels

practices, I have chosen to discuss them together in order to emphasise how transmedia storytelling is simply the more obvious and explicit manifestation of the logics of navigable space that underpin these textual extensions. Like their core narratives, paratexts and transmedia elements often ask to be read through feelings of navigable space and kinaesthesia, both of which help to cohere the vast textual universe. In the following section I explore how both *Lost* and *Game of Thrones* use paratextual and transmedia elements as part of their storytelling strategies, elements that often very explicitly invite particular embodied and kinaesthetic readings as a means of cohering the disparate structure of the vast narrative.

As I discussed in both my introduction and review of literature, paratexts are the smaller texts surrounding a central textual object. While they are commonly categorised according to promotional, narrational, or interpretative functions, all paratexts are, at heart, a means of orientation towards and away from their central object. Paratextual theory is steeped in the language of transportation, movement, and navigation. Gérard Genette, whose study of literary paratexts first coined the term and developed the theory, describes a paratext as a ‘threshold’, a zone of transition and transaction between different elements of a text.⁸⁷ Jonathan Gray extends Genette’s work to contemporary film and television, defining paratexts as ‘a realm through which we...travel in order to consume and make sense of a text’.⁸⁸ Throughout his work Gray repeatedly returns to navigational tropes and terms when describing how paratexts operate, such as ‘route-making’, ‘carving out...pathways’ and ‘plotting...course[s]’.⁸⁹ In this sense, rather than visually conceptualising paratexts as a border, a frame or even orbiting objects, they are better understood as a logical extension of the vast narrative’s navigable space.

The centrality of navigable space in descriptions of such extensive textual practices seems to imply that this media universe is disorienting, demanding that a clear

and comics to flesh out the narrative of the games); web series (*The Lizzie Bennett Diaries* integrates its social media presence into particular narrative functions); and, of course, television series.

⁸⁷ Gérard Genette, *Paratexts: Thresholds of Interpretation*, trans. by Jane E. Lewin (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997).

⁸⁸ Ibid., p. 36.

⁸⁹ Gray, *Show Sold Separately*, pp. 154, 143, 147.

path be set out for audiences to travel through. Elizabeth Evans, discussing how new technologies and associated practices always exist alongside more established forms, suggests that ‘when faced with something new...audiences seek to understand it through something familiar’.⁹⁰ While Evans locates this ‘something familiar’ within existing media formats, I would place it instead within the most familiar, primordial form of them all – the body. Mark Hansen suggests that ‘as media lose their material specificity’ in an era of digital convergence, ‘the body takes on a more prominent function’.⁹¹ Following Hansen, I argue that television’s paratextual and transmedia practices use a direct and very obvious address to the body as means of mitigating the disorienting, unwieldy structures of the vast narrative. It is also a way of ensuring consistency across the narrative universe – all elements of the text share a particular reading strategy that revolves around embodiment, navigation, and mobility.

We can begin to explore this through some of the promotional paratexts and campaigns that surround the vast narrative. As the sites of encounter between the audience and the television programme become dispersed across multiple media sites, the advertising industry can no longer be assured of the size of its audience. Indeed, the promotion of new television distribution models is based on the assumption that no one wants to watch television commercials⁹² – the idea of the Netflix or DVD binge-watch are clear examples of this trend. In order to adapt to this context, the advertising industry draws from the practices and techniques of television’s transmedia elements. Here, advertising becomes presented as an immersive experience in its own right.⁹³ Immersive advertising is particularly targeted towards the body, in what is commonly known as ‘sensory marketing’. Such advertising explicitly targets all of the senses (or at least, the

⁹⁰ Elizabeth Evans, *Transmedia Television: Audiences, New Media, and Daily Life* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 113.

⁹¹ Mark B. N. Hansen, *New Philosophy for New Media* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), p. 22.

⁹² Jason Jacobs, ‘Television, Interrupted: Pollution or Aesthetic?’, in *Television as Digital Media*, ed. by James Bennett and Niki Strange (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 255-80 (p. 260).

⁹³ This paradigm is labelled the ‘experience economy’, which suggests that consumption today revolves around the desire for particular experiences, emotions, and sensations, rather than goods or services. See B. Joseph Pine II and James H. Gilmore, *The Experience Economy: Work is Theatre and Every Business a Stage* (Boston: Harvard Business Review, 1999).

traditional five) in the service of promoting a particular brand or product. Of course, advertising has always relied upon affect and embodiment: it appeals to the sensations of the body to establish a powerful connection between desire and product, and demands that audiences make cross-modal connections between images of products and sensations such as tactility or taste. However, the use of sensory marketing in contemporary television advertising works as much to integrate media space as it does to encourage consumption – in fact, the two purposes cannot be distinguished from one another. Enrica Picarelli suggests that television advertising uses ‘sensorial markers that give viewers a reference point to navigate the multichannel terrain of digital media’, elegantly highlighting the way that sensory marketing can operate as a form of textual orientation itself.⁹⁴ The bodily address of sensory marketing can be understood as a reaction to the dispersed transmediation of the vast narrative, explicitly reorienting itself within the familiar forms of the body and the familiarity of a kinaesthetic reading strategy.

Shortly before the release of the first season of *Game of Thrones*, HBO (in conjunction with marketing agency Campfire) launched a sensory marketing campaign called ‘The Maester’s Path’. Part advertising experience, part alternate reality game, part transmedia storytelling,⁹⁵ ‘The Maester’s Path’ aimed to introduce potential audiences to the world of Westeros. There were five sections to the campaign, each of which corresponded to one of the traditional sensory modes. The game could only be completed through a ‘full’ sensory experience. The sight component involved traversing an online version of the Wall; the sound section required players to identify the houses of Westeros by listening to stories in an online ‘tavern’; and touch introduced a ‘winter is coming’ iPad weather app, in which the climate of Westeros was mapped onto that of the user’s location. In the smell section, journalists were sent packages containing small scent vials

⁹⁴ Enrica Picarelli, ‘Sensory Regimes in TV Marketing: Boardwalk Empire’s Chromatic Enhancement and Digital Aesthetics’, *Transformations*, 22 (2012), para 14 of 22.
<http://www.transformationsjournal.org/journal/issue_22/article_03.shtml>

⁹⁵ This game was created by the transmedia production company Campfire, most famous for the viral campaign for *The Blair Witch Project* (Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez, 1999). Its hybrid nature reflects the combination of Campfire’s experiential marketing pedigree and HBO’s particular brand image.

from regions of Westeros. The journalists shared their information and experiences online, and the fan community worked together to identify the scents and solve the accompanying puzzle. The final section of the game was by far the most publicised and innovative. In order to approximate the taste of Westeros, food trucks travelled around Los Angeles and New York, serving cuisine inspired by the series. The menu varied according to which particular region of Westeros was featured, including dishes such as roast squab, trout, and the ever-popular lemon cakes. While each section of the game could be played in isolation, all five had to be completed to finish the game; therefore, the game aimed towards a ‘complete’ sensory immersion into the world of Westeros.

Yet as well as fleshing out the world of Westeros, the sensory progression of ‘The Maester’s Path’ narrativises both the space of the transmedia world *and* the space of the body. The game makes the body’s extensions and sensations part of the world of Westeros by inviting embodied audiences to explicitly *flesh* that world out. Once again, this marks an attempt to ground the disorienting breadth of the vast narrative within the familiar horizons of the sensorial body. Indeed, Manovich suggests that in being traversed by users, the spatial flexibility of navigable space becomes reoriented around the horizons of the body.⁹⁶ Yet by narrativising the body-in-space in this way, the campaign also foreshadows the corporeal, kinaesthetic reading strategy of the programme itself. The idea of a complete sensory experience means nothing without kinaesthesia – it is the kinaesthetic sense, as the transmodal sense necessary for navigation, which allows the different sections of the game to coalesce into a whole. Explicitly inviting audiences to ‘step onto the path’, to ‘begin your journey’, ‘The Maester’s Path’ draws upon the same reading strategies of navigable space as *Game of Thrones* itself, presenting itself as a space through which to travel. Campfire described the game as a ‘sensory journey’, highlighting the fact that the sensorial exploration was designed to be an impetus for movement and motion. Campfire also stated that their aim was to mirror the ‘attention to detail that HBO would bring to *Game of Thrones* by evoking the visceral nature of [the senses]’. By

⁹⁶ Manovich, *The Language of New Media*, p. 262.

implying that the detail in *Game of Thrones* is *sensory* detail, Campfire presumes that the series can only be appreciated and interpreted through an embodied reading strategy. The paratexts are thus explicitly framed as logical extensions of the kinaesthetics of the programme itself, inviting embodied readings and constructing navigable spaces.

The ordinary kinaesthetics of transmedia storytelling

In the vast narrative, transmedia storytelling tends to be employed for world-building purposes, reflecting what Jeffrey Sconce identifies as a general trend towards complex universes in US television of the 1990s and 2000s.⁹⁷ Henry Jenkins concisely describes transmedia storytelling as ‘the art of world making’,⁹⁸ and Geoffrey Long as the ‘story of a world’.⁹⁹ Both Jenkins and Long locate the aesthetics of transmedia in the ‘art’ of world-building. Yet the transmedia world is never simply something to be constructed, completed, and then consumed: it is designed precisely to be explored, again demonstrating how the elements of the vast narrative ask to be read through the kinaesthetics of navigable space. Elizabeth Evans usefully recognises that transmediation varies by degree, drawing a distinction between ambitious, calculated transmedia storytelling, and more general practices of transmedia distribution and engagement.¹⁰⁰ Transmedia storytelling aims to tell a single story across multiple media platforms, whereas transmedia distribution works to make content available across multiple platforms, opening it up to multiple sites of engagement. My focus on narrative drama means that I have largely restricted the following discussion to the storytelling dimensions of transmediation, yet both elements are key to the general kinaesthetics of navigable space that structure the extensions of the vast narrative.

⁹⁷ Jeffrey Sconce, ‘What If? Charting Television’s New Textual Boundaries’, in *Television After TV: Essays on a Medium in Transition*, ed. by Lynn Spigel and Jan Olssen (Durham: Duke University Press, 2004), pp. 93–112 (p. 95).

⁹⁸ Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), p. 21.

⁹⁹ Geoffrey Long, ‘Transmedia Storytelling: Business, Aesthetics and Production at the Jim Henson Company’ (unpublished doctoral dissertation, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 2007), p. 48.

¹⁰⁰ Evans, *Transmedia Television*, p. 11.

Lost's use of transmediation possesses an ambition and scale that sets it apart from its competitors. The series aimed to create a coherent transmedia experience, in which the broadcast narrative was only a stepping-stone to and from the larger narrative world. *Time* magazine suggested that the series could not be evaluated as a conventional television series at all, for '*Lost* only begins with the 60 minutes you see on TV'.¹⁰¹ These ambitions are most clearly seen through its use of alternate reality games during the hiatus periods between seasons. An alternate reality game is an interactive, multi-media experience that operates within the geographical and media spaces of the 'real world', thus creating an 'alternate reality' by blurring the lines between fact and fiction. They usually involve complex puzzles that rely on cooperation between players, and the narrative progression is subject to the activity of the players. In this sense, an alternate reality game is a very obvious manifestation of navigable space, creating a narrative that only unfolds through the movements and practices of its players.

The first and most ambitious of *Lost*'s alternate reality games was *The Lost Experience*, which began in May 2006 and ran until the end of September that year, bridging the gap between seasons two and three of *Lost*. The game involved uncovering and exploring the backstory of the mysterious organisations introduced in the second season, the Dharma Initiative and the Hanso Foundation. Much of the game revolved around a fictional character called Rachel Blake, who released a series of web videos with instructions and tasks for the game players. There were five key stages to the game, each of which was based around particular websites, but involved many ancillary texts and media forms, including the real world spaces of major cities around the globe.

The game was created with the cooperation of three television networks – ABC in the US, Channel Four in the UK, and Channel Seven in Australia. This meant that many of the clues were spread across the geographical and media spaces of the three countries – advertisements were shown on each of the three channels, clues were hidden throughout the official *Lost* pages on each network website, and glyphs (part of a jigsaw puzzle activity

¹⁰¹ Quoted in Jennifer Gillan, *Television and New Media: Must-Click TV* (Routledge: New York, 2011), p. 158.

in stage three of the game) were even placed in streets and parks in Los Angeles, London, and Sydney. Some clues were also found through the websites of other international broadcasters, such as AXN East Asia and CHCGV South Korea. Here, the game brought together the transnational, transmedia spaces of both media distribution and everyday life, collecting various physical sites, online portals and broadcast channels together as part of a shared space to be navigated. This reflects the fact that the vast narrative world is one to be explored and encountered as a practice; as Janet Murray suggests, the answer to riddles in journey stories is never just a simple answer, but a 'series of beautifully orchestrated steps'.¹⁰² For the transmedia consumer, these steps tend, as Angela Ndalani notes, to require a 'physical motion and a literal kineticism'.¹⁰³ Like media-induced tourism, this can be understood as a logical, if somewhat extreme, manifestation of televisual kinaesthetics. Once again, the vast narrative relies upon a structure of navigable space in order to make its vast proliferations feel more coherent and consistent.

Such discourses of navigation and travel were explicitly referenced in the second stage of the game, in which Rachel Blake travelled to Europe to chase Hanso Executive Thomas Mittelwerk. Rachel published videos and new information under the guise of a personal travel blog. On the surface, her blog was an average travel blog, containing pictures from various cities in Europe, along with descriptions of her activities and interesting local facts. Yet players soon discovered a secret section that detailed her investigation into the Hanso Foundation. With this website, the game set up a structure in which generic travel narratives were the means through which to access particular information relevant to the storyworld of *Lost*. In other words, in order to get to the deeper levels of the transmedia narrative, players had to first read a story of travel. Once again, this highlights the predominance of ideas of travel and navigation within the structure of the vast narrative. And once again, it points to the centrality of such reading strategies in maintaining the coherency of the massive narrative world – it is travel that

¹⁰² Janet H. Murray, *Hamlet on the Holodeck* (New York: Free Press, 1997), p. 139.

¹⁰³ Angela Ndalani, *The Horror Sensorium: Media and the Senses* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2012), p. 186.

serves as the bridge between the highly recognisable narrative core and its furthest extensions.

Earlier in this chapter I suggested that kinaesthetic reading strategies relied on two twin aspects of corporeal intimacy – the familiar and the ordinary. Of course, alternate reality games such as *The Lost Experience* seem quite remote from any sense of the ordinary or the everyday, and fall to the far end of the continuum of television kinaesthetics. However, I would argue that just as promotional paratexts base their reading strategies and modes of address within the familiarity of the sensorial body, transmedia storytelling continues to rely upon and exploit ideas of our kinaesthetic familiarity with media consumption. Tim Edensor argues that while tourism is widely understood as isolated from the everyday, its connotations of escape, authenticity, and extraordinariness are culturally coded and serve particular ideological functions. He suggests that despite the idea that we shed our routines while on holiday, tourists continue to ‘carry quotidian habits and responses with them; they are part of their baggage’.¹⁰⁴ I would suggest that such quotidian baggage is precisely an embodied one, for we always bring along our existing bodies when we travel. The kinaesthetics of travel combine both the familiarity of our embodied experience with the novelty of the movement through new spaces. I believe that transmedia storytelling works in an identical way: by relying on a reading strategy that involves ideas of travel and kinaesthesia, such storytelling continues to be structured by quintessentially televisual ideas of the ordinary and the everyday.

Alternate reality games tend to capitalise on the tools and frameworks that are already embedded within the routine lives of players; as Dave Szulborski suggests, a ‘successful game immerses the world of the game into the everyday existence and life of the player’.¹⁰⁵ However, while Szulborski frames this solely in terms of the various media we encounter in our ordinary lives, he fails to consider how our everyday existence is

¹⁰⁴ Tim Edensor, ‘Performing Tourism, Staging Tourism’, *Tourist Studies*, 1 (2001), 59-81 (p. 61).

¹⁰⁵ Dave Szulborski, *This is Not a Game: A Guide to Alternate Reality Gaming* (Pennsylvania: Newfiction Publishing, 2005), p. 31.

always an embodied one. Angela Ndaljianis more astutely recognises that as well as being dispersed through everyday space, a transmedia text is ‘written in very real and immediate ways across the body’ of the audience.¹⁰⁶ In light of what I have termed television’s relatable kinaesthetics, I believe that this may not simply be written across and read through the *corporeality* of the body, but through its *habitual movements* (or kinaesthetics), particularly those experienced in moving through both media and everyday space.

The multimodal delivery of transmedia narratives across our familiar spaces is generally seen as adding the reality to the alternate reality game.¹⁰⁷ *The Lost Experience* began with a commercial for The Hanso Foundation, a mysterious organisation referenced briefly in the televised narrative. The commercial displayed a phone number which, when called, relayed an automated menu listing information about Hanso, a web address, and most importantly, a message from a hacker calling herself Persephone. Players had to follow Persephone’s directions to unlock certain parts of the website, uncovering more clues and leading them deeper into the game. In this sense, the game created a relay of transfers from the television screen to the phone network to the online space of the website. However, this relay operates as much on the level of kinaesthesia as on the level of distribution. One of the websites attached to The Hanso Foundation’s site was subLYMONal.com, which was part *The Lost Experience* clue site, and part marketing campaign for the game sponsor Sprite. The website displayed six blurred television screens and a text box in which code words could be entered. While many players, myself included, wasted a lot of time figuring out code words that provided useful information, the task that actually progressed the game required players to click each television screen a specified number of times – the first four, the second eight, and so on through the cursed number sequence that played a large role in the broadcast narrative. In the series, the button is pressed after typing in the number sequence; in the alternate reality game,

¹⁰⁶ Ndaljianis, *The Horror Sensorium*, p. 176.

¹⁰⁷ Jeffrey Kim, Elan Lee, Timothy Thomas and Caroline Dombrowski, ‘Storytelling in New Media: The Case of Alternate Reality Fames, 2001-2009’, *First Monday*, 14 (2009).

the numbers become represented at the level of clicks, the kinaesthetic gestures needed to interact with the particular online interface. In order to engage with the multiple interfaces of television, as represented by the six screens, players had to translate the narrative information of the broadcast text into the highly repetitive bodily actions (and related sensations) of everyday media consumption. Sheets-Johnstone notes that the verbal forms we give to our engagement with the media – ‘clicking, tweeting, pressing, and so on – attest to the movement we are constantly giving thinking in our everyday lives’.¹⁰⁸ subLYMONal.com similarly attests to the importance of kinaesthesia in our everyday encounters with both television and its transmedia extensions, making the question of engaging with the multiple interfaces of television one of *kinaesthetic transfer*, mediated through the habitual actions of the body.

This notion of a kind of kinaesthetic, habitual familiarity with media forms raises some important questions about how we understand the particular experience of navigable space. For while the idea of navigable space evokes connotations of unfettered movement and free flow (ideas that are often reiterated in accounts of how texts travel across media forms in transmediation¹⁰⁹), there is nothing within the idea itself that presumes that such navigation has to be easy, smooth, or enjoyable. Jo Smith, in her work on DVD menu navigation, coins the lovely phrase ‘clunk affect’ to refer to the often awkward dimensions of such interfaces.¹¹⁰ Her work provides an important caveat to the rhetoric surrounding the choice and power enabled by the DVD (and by transmedia in general), instead suggesting that its affective reality remains based in low-level, quotidian sensations of impatience and frustration. If television performance relies as much on

¹⁰⁸ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, ‘Bodily Resonance’, in *Moving Imagination: Explorations of Gesture and Inner Movement*, ed. by Helena De Preester (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2013), pp. 19-36 (p. 20).

¹⁰⁹ Will Brooker’s ‘overflow’ and Henry Jenkins’s ‘spreadable media’ both connote forms that move easily and freely. See Will Brooker, ‘Living on Dawson’s Creek: Teen Viewers, Cultural Convergence, and Television Overflow’, *International Journal of Cultural Studies*, 4 (2001), 456-472; and Henry Jenkins, Sam Ford, and Joshua Green, *Spreadable Media: Creating Value and Meaning in a Networked Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2013).

¹¹⁰ Jo Smith, ‘DVD Technologies and the Art of Control’, in *Film and Television after DVD*, ed. by James Bennett and Tom Brown (New York: Routledge, 2008), pp. 129-48 (p. 147).

relatable kinaesthetics as on spectacular athleticism, then its navigable spaces and travelling texts might similarly be grounded within a very quotidian kind of kinaesthesia.

The Lost Experience is, of course, a very exceptional example of transmediation. Many members of the audience would not have engaged with these transmedia extensions, meaning that the conclusions we can draw from this case study are perhaps limited in scope. To some extent, this could be an example of audiences engaging in resistant readings, or at least rejecting some elements of the dominant reading strategy offered to us by producers. Yet I would contend that the ideas of navigation and kinaesthetic experiences of interfaces so crucial to *The Lost Experience* can also be found within the main programme of *Lost* itself, and thus may still be encountered as invited modes of reading by audiences who do not follow them to their most extreme ends. Jennifer Gillan suggests that the narrative structure of *Lost* reflects the experience of browsing the internet, in terms of a hypertext-like, networked narrative that can be drilled down into smaller arcs and segments.¹¹¹ Gillan's argument here is not convincing – most ensemble narratives use a similar structure – yet I believe she is right in identifying a deeper connection between the televised world of *Lost* and the experience of online interfaces. Instead, however, I locate this connection in *Lost*'s kinaesthetics, rather than its narrative or aesthetics.

The storyline of the second season of *Lost* revolved around the purpose of the button in the hatch, which had to (supposedly) be pushed every 108 minutes to avoid ending the world. Many episodes included shots of characters sitting or standing at the computer keyboard, typing in the code and pressing the 'execute' key



Figure 2.19 The ordinary kinaesthetics of sitting in front of a computer screen. (*Lost*, 'Collision' 2:8)

(Figure 2.19). Tara McPherson suggests that the experience of interacting with an interface

¹¹¹ Gillan, *Television and New Media*, pp. 158-9.

involves a set of ‘related sensations’ arising from the actions of clicking and selection actions, sensations that are increasingly familiar to a computer-literate audience.¹¹² In this sense, the pressing of the button is deeply embedded in another form of very relatable, very ordinary kinaesthetics. It is particularly telling that the button motif was introduced in season two, the year *Lost* began to implement more ambitious forms of transmedia storytelling and employ a wider use of paratextual elements. The very familiarity and mundanity of the kinaesthetics of the button can thus be understood as a way in which the narrative seeks to provide phenomenological security, once again using its kinaesthetics as a way to anchor its rapidly proliferating extensions.

Importantly, there is nothing particularly glamorous or exciting about these movements – the computer interface is old and dated, and the shot composition inside the hatch feels claustrophobic and tight, particularly in comparison to the sweeping beach and jungle vistas that characterised the first season (Figure 2.23). In this sense, I would argue that the button fashions a ‘clunk affect’ similar to Smith’s DVD interface, in both its awkward framing and its strange sense of mundanity. After the monsters and melodrama of the first season, centring the second season around the repetitive task of typing (even if that typing saves the world) gives a completely different feeling to the narrative. Like television’s relatable kinaesthetics, there might be something particularly televisual about this particular reading strategy. Caroline Levine argues that television has a particular propensity to produce what she terms the ‘shock of the banal’, in which the explicit recognition of routine experience produces a jolt of surprise.¹¹³ The sequence as a whole, and particularly the boxy framing of the close up shots of the keyboard and the execute button, produce such a jolt, a ‘clunk’ of recognition at seeing these familiar movements within the decisively non-everyday world of *Lost*. Consequently, while the button remains part of the fantastical world of the *Lost* narrative, its particular affective reality – arising

¹¹² Tara McPherson, ‘Reload: Liveness, Mobility, and the Web’, in *New Media, Old Media: A History and Theory Reader*, ed. by Wendy Hui Kyong Chun and Thomas W. Keenan (London: Routledge, 2005), pp. 199-208 (p. 201).

¹¹³ Caroline Levine, ‘Extraordinary Ordinarity: Realism Now and Then’, *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 63 (2013), para 3.
<<http://www.erudit.org/revue/ravon/2013/v/n63/1025618ar.html>>

from the ordinary kinaesthetics of everyday life and media use – helps to construct a decisive link between the televised portion of the vast narrative and its broader transmediated experience.

Moving With Serial Narration

The descriptor ‘vast’ has unavoidable spatial connotations, and thus it is perhaps unsurprising that such narratives invite themselves to be encountered as sprawling networks, and to be read through ideas of navigation and travel. However, it might also imply a certain temporal enormity – the perpetual unfolding of a massive serial narrative, and the enduring travels of the audience who follow it over a long period of time.¹¹⁴ In my earlier discussion of Sheets-Johnstone’s categories of movement, I noted that while two described spatial qualities, two described the *temporality* of movement. Any kinaesthetic reading must necessarily be attuned to the temporality of movement, as well as its spatial qualities and dimensions.

We can see the tight relationship between temporal and spatial movement in a metaphor that *Lost* showrunner Damon Lindelof repeatedly returns to when describing his experience of constructing his vast narrative: tap dancing. For Lindelof, tap dancing is a somewhat artificial form of movement, something one is forced to do when forward progression is impossible – namely, when network pressure forces a series to remain on the air beyond the natural scope of the story. In an interview for the podcast *On Point*, Lindelof concedes that while ‘tap dancing is very interesting to watch for a certain period of time’, you do not want to ‘do it forever’.¹¹⁵ Here, Lindelof implies that the most desirable form of movement is smooth and goal-oriented, suggesting that the serial narration of the vast narrative should move cleanly from one horizon to another. This is a particular evaluative claim, one I will return to unpack in more detail towards the end of this

¹¹⁴ My thoughts on seriality as an ‘unfolding’ narrative are indebted to John Tulloch and Manuel Alvarado’s work on the quintessential British example of a vast narrative, *Doctor Who*, which they describe as an ‘unfolding text’. See Tulloch and Alvarado, *Doctor Who: The Unfolding Text* (London: Macmillan, 1983).

¹¹⁵ Tom Ashbrook, ‘ABC’s “Lost” TV Drama’, *On Point With Tom Ashbrook* (NPR, 28 March 2007). <<http://onpoint.wbur.org/2007/03/28/abcs-lost-tv-drama>>

chapter. Yet overall, Lindelof's point raises some issues and ideas crucial to my argument. I find it particularly interesting that he chooses to use an embodied metaphor to describe the process of authoring (and consuming) vast narrative worlds. We can read this as yet another testament to the significance of embodied reading strategies in both the creation and the consumption of vast narrative television. Yet he also links the metaphor specifically to *serial* narration, which raises the question as to whether kinaesthetic reading might be particularly relevant, or particularly emphatic, for the massive seriality of the vast narrative. I now turn to consider how the unfolding qualities of movement might be employed by television's unfolding texts, and to what extent a kinaesthetic reading strategy might be used to negotiate the experiences and affects of consuming serial fiction.

As a narrative form, a serial is a continuous story released in smaller units over a period of time. Jennifer Hayward defines it as an 'ongoing narrative released in successive parts',¹¹⁶ and Linda Hughes and Michael Lund as a story unfolding 'over an extended time with enforced interruptions'.¹¹⁷ Although elements of seriality have been a part of art and narrative for as long as these forms have existed, the serial emerged as a recognisable cultural form with the rise of mass consumption and mass audiences in the nineteenth century. Roger Hagedorn argues that because the serial encourages brand loyalty and sustained consumption patterns, the form always emerges at moments when a medium becomes a *mass medium*.¹¹⁸ If, as Hagedorn suggests, serial texts always 'serve to promote the very medium in which they appear',¹¹⁹ then they may have something to tell us about the preferred reading strategies associated with particular media forms.

When television was introduced in the mid-20th century, the serial form had already been a mainstay of 19th century novels, newspaper strip serials in the 1930s and

¹¹⁶ Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fictions from Dickens to Soap Opera* (Lexington: University of Kentucky Press, 1997), p. 3.

¹¹⁷ Linda K. Hughes and Michael Lund, *The Victorian Serial* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1991), p. 2.

¹¹⁸ Roger Hagedorn, 'Doubtless to Be Continued: A Brief History of Serial Narrative', in *To Be Continued: Soap Operas Around the World*, ed. by Roger C. Allen (London: Routledge, 1995), pp. 27-48 (p. 29).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

1940s, the chapter plays of pre-1950s cinema, and radio programming. The first years of television were largely dominated by single plays, but the serial became more established as the medium grew in popularity. During the 1960s and 1970s, US television was dominated by episodic series in prime time, and continuous serials during daytime scheduling. The serial form reached prime time in the 1980s as what Horace Newcomb refers to as the ‘cumulative narrative’, which employs seriality for the purposes of character development while still largely retaining an episodic narrative structure.¹²⁰ As Newcomb argues, these serial elements were largely intended to maximise the ratings and mass appeal of particular dramas, rewarding regular viewers without sacrificing new ones. With the rise of cable television, which multiplied textual output and fragmented audiences, serial form became more pervasive across the medium as a whole. Like Newcomb, Robin Nelson identifies a semi-serial structure in dramas in the late twentieth century: the ‘flexi-narrative’, in which episodic television incorporated aspects of serial narration, such as multiple storylines.¹²¹ This trend – the increasing merger between series and serial forms – continued as channels sought to establish loyal consuming audiences in an age of televisual plenty. Today, ‘quality television’ is largely synonymous with seriality; namely, a specific form of seriality that relies on what Jason Mittell terms a ‘shifting balance’ between episodic and serial narrative.¹²² This brief history demonstrates that, as Hagedorn attests, seriality tends to emerge within television at particular moments of redefinition.

Unsurprisingly, many scholars draw a link between the features of seriality and those of television itself. The format’s particular rhythms of episodicity and seriality – the relationship between part and whole – are key to the foundational theories of the

¹²⁰ Newcomb coined the term in relation to *Magnum PI* (CBS, 1980-1988), but it could also be applied to programmes such as *Dallas* (CBS, 1978-1991). See Horace Newcomb, ‘Narrative and Genre’, in *The SAGE Handbook of Media Studies*, ed. by John Downing (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2004), pp. 413-28 (p. 422).

¹²¹ Robin Nelson, *TV Drama in Transition: Forms, Values and Cultural Change* (Houndsmills, Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1997), p. 30.

¹²² Jason Mittell, ‘Narrative Complexity in Contemporary American Television’, *The Velvet Light Trap*, 58 (2006), pp. 29-40 (p. 32).

medium, from Raymond Williams' flow to John Ellis's segmentation.¹²³ John Caughie believes that the dominance of serial narration in television arises from its ability to exploit the 'interruptibility' of the medium itself, in which the enforced interruptions of the narrative align with the enforced interruptions of advertising and domestic demands.¹²⁴ Lucy Mazdon describes seriality as 'highly televisual', uniting the aims of the industry (promoting loyalty), textual structure (flow and segmentation) and audience expectations (reading in instalments) in a way that 'mirrors the television experience in general'.¹²⁵ If the experience of seriality and the experience of television seem to occupy much of the same territory, such as routine consumption and segmentation, then seriality might also intersect with the frames through which we are invited to make sense of those experiences – namely, television's kinaesthetic reading strategies.

I believe that there is something about seriality that makes it particularly well suited for television's kinaesthetic reading strategies. Seriality possesses a rhythm that reverberates with an embodied experience of movement – a rhythm of unfolding progression combined with interruption and segmentation. The embodied experience of movement is often conceptualised as collections of smaller segments (such as steps, gestures, or actions), yet still remains a continuous experience. For even without actively progressing forward through space, movement is always a dynamic, unfolding action. It gestures beyond itself, pointing towards a particular direction or aim, and creating a projective sense of both space and time. Of course, this is not to argue that movement is always explicitly goal-oriented; movements can exist along the whole continuum of direction and aim, sometimes circular, often untargeted, and at times unrealised entirely. Yet regardless of the shape and direction movement takes, it is always an unfolding process. Erin Manning refers to this quality as 'pre-acceleration' – a force of potential that

¹²³ See Williams, *Television*, and John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).

¹²⁴ John Caughie, *Edge of Darkness* (London: BFI, 2007), p. 51.

¹²⁵ Lucy Mazdon 'Preface', in *The Contemporary Television Series*, ed. Lucy Mazdon and Michael Hammond (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2005), pp. x-xii (p. xi).

can ‘be felt before it actualises’.¹²⁶ By this, she means that movement always opens out to subsequent gestures and possible trajectories, always hints at its future extensions in the present moment. In this sense, if kinaesthesia involves sensations of continuity, anticipation and expectation – dynamics that are also fundamental to seriality – then serial narration might naturally lend itself towards a preferred kinaesthetic reading strategy.

The kinaesthetic logics of the cliffhanger

The features of seriality are epitomised in the form’s archetypal endings: the cliffhanger, or the heightened moment of suspense that ends a serial segment. The cliffhanger is a well-established narrative device and is a staple of all manifestations of serial narration, regardless of medium or genre. It is motivated by clear economic imperatives, reinforcing brand loyalty and ensuring that the audience will return to consume the subsequent instalment. In television, the cliffhanger exists across different scales: they are most commonly found at the end of an episode, but attenuated versions can end individual scenes or acts within an episode, and season finales often use very intense ones, designed to maintain interest and engagement over the long hiatus period. The cliffhanger mentality exploits two of the key features of seriality: its segmented, interrupted structure, and its entrenched refusal of closure. Cliffhangers thus perfectly embody the particular rhythms of seriality, in which ongoing movement is marked by interruption.

Yet the cliffhanger is also an embodied metaphor, evoking a precarious mode of suspension. While this does relate to the history of the narrative device (Thomas Hardy’s serialised novel *A Pair of Blue Eyes* ended one instalment with its protagonist hanging from a cliff face¹²⁷), its persistence as a metaphor suggests that it may have a fundamental connection to the serial experience. To once more return to my contention that the metaphors we use tell us much about our embodied experience, I believe that the

¹²⁶ Erin Manning, *Relationescapes: Movement, Art, Philosophy* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2009), p. 6.

¹²⁷ Thomas Hardy, *A Pair of Blue Eyes* (London: Macmillan, 1976 [1873]).

cliffhanger attests to the importance of kinaesthesia in the experience of serial television. The embodied, kinaesthetic experience embedded within the metaphor – a state of bodily suspension – may tell us something about how it feels to experience a televisual cliffhanger. However, few accounts of seriality's cliffhanger logic address its embodied elements, preferring to focus on narrative, story, or cognitive accounts of attention or concentration. For Sarah Kozloff, serial television organises its narrative structure according to the segmentation of the schedule,¹²⁸ and for John Caughie, seriality ritually disrupts the attention of the audience.¹²⁹ While neither of these arguments is necessarily flawed – the cliffhanger does suspend the narrative, and it does forcefully redirect the focus of the audience – Kozloff and Caughie's work is clearly based in the belief that television is inextricable from its live broadcast context. Yet today, television is increasingly encountered through and created for DVD formats or streaming services, a viewing structure that lacks the ritual interruptions of broadcast television. In order to more thoughtfully consider contemporary seriality, then, I want to redefine television's serial interruptions as those of interrupted movement, particularly *embodied* movement, as read and experienced through a kinaesthetic reading strategy.

Many television cliffhangers explicitly use instances of halted action, for the body in motion has a particular power to gesture beyond itself. Jeremy Butler frames action as a sort of pivot point in the soap opera cliffhanger, in which characters are 'interrupted just as they are about to commit murder, discover their true paternity, or consummate a romance'.¹³⁰ Here, Butler places thwarted action as the key to the cliffhanger mentality of serial fiction, thus hinting at its kinaesthetic power. *Game of Thrones* exploits the kinaesthetic impact of thwarted action in its cliffhangers. 'Walk of Punishment' (3:3), ends with Jaime Lannister (Nikolaj Coster-Waldau) attempting to use his family's wealth to secure his release from his captor Locke (Noah Taylor), a mercenary hired by Roose

¹²⁸ Sarah Kozloff, 'Narrative Theory and Television', in *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*, ed. by Robert C. Allen (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), pp. 67-100 (p. 90).

¹²⁹ Caughie, *Television Drama*, p. 205.

¹³⁰ Jeremy G. Butler, *Television: Critical Methods and Applications*, 4th edn (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 12.

Bolton (Michael McElhatton). Locke, offended by the bribery, severs Jaime's right hand. The sudden, abrupt burst of violence is all the more shocking for coming at the end of a relatively slow-paced scene. The conversation between the two men occurs mostly in tight close-ups with relatively long durations, evoking a growing sense of tension. Tension is, to return to Sheets-Johnstone's categories of movement, a function of the projectional quality of movement – the way in which movement unfolds, or how its 'tensional quality is kinetically manifest'.¹³¹ The sudden ending of the scene transforms the scene's sustained projectional rhythms into an abrupt cut, one that severs both the extensions of the text and of Jamie's body (although one more permanently than the other).

Much of the shock of this scene does emerge from the visceral impact of its body horror. Yet its affective power cannot be separated from its position at the very end of the episode, and as such, is deeply intertwined with the kinaesthetic affect of the cliffhanger. Dee Reynolds defines kinaesthetic affect as a product of movement's projectional qualities, involving the 'impulse towards or anticipation of movement rather than actual movement'. André Lepecki more broadly sketches the kinaesthetic affect of movement, suggesting that Western thought privileges smooth, reproductive movements precisely due to their pleasant affects, as opposed to the negative feelings of 'kinaesthetic stuttering'.¹³² I would argue that the painful suspense of the cliffhanger emerges from such a kinaesthetic stuttering. In his review of the episode for *The A.V. Club*, David Sims concisely, if colloquially, reflects this:

'...that was truly shocking in that holy shit *Game Of Thrones* way where it smash-cuts to black and credits and you vainly scream for more, more, more.'¹³³

Sims subtly draws a parallel between the 'smash-cuts' of the editing and of Locke's sword, and between Jamie's anguished scream and the scream of the audience. I am always

¹³¹ Maxine Sheets-Johnstone, 'From Movement to Dance', *Phenomenology and the Cognitive Sciences*, II (2012), 39-57 (p. 46).

¹³² André Lepecki, *Exhausting Dance: Performance and the Politics of Movement* (New York: Routledge, 2006), p. 1.

¹³³ David Sims, 'Game Of Thrones (newbies): "Walk Of Punishment" (for newbies)', *The A.V. Club*, 14 April 2013 <<http://www.avclub.com/tvclub/game-of-thrones-newbies-walk-of-punishment-for-new-95986>>

struck by how my reaction to this moment is heightened by its position at the end of the episode, how my horror and pain responds to the sharp slice through *both* flesh and diegesis. By pairing the halted flow of the narrative with the freezing of bodies in motion, the cliffhanger evokes a strong sense of kinaesthetic affect, emphasising the particular gestural power of the cut of the cliffhanger. The cliffhanger metaphor thus begins to make perfect sense, for it emerges from our affective engagement with the rhythms of seriality.

As well as halting the movement of an episode or scene, the cliffhanger also simultaneously opens itself out to the future by deferring the promise of answers or resolution to the next instalment. Deferred resolution is key to serial narration, yet tends to be singled out in criticisms of the form. To return to Lindelof's 'tap-dancing', seriality's endless middle is usually seen as something to be avoided. A similar claim can be traced within the academic literature: Hagedorn dismisses narrative deferral as a marker of the capitalist drive to maintain consumption,¹³⁴ and Tania Modleski suggests that the endless 'search for tomorrow' in soap operas forecloses a proper engagement with the 'real social needs' of the women who consume them.¹³⁵ However, both of these arguments reiterate particular evaluative norms, again presuming that progressive, goal-oriented movement towards a defined end-point is the best form for both art and for politics. In contrast, Patricia Mellencamp more usefully recognises that such unpleasant feelings are key to our engagement with television, suggesting that 'anxiety is television's affect'.¹³⁶ Consequently, just as I attempted to reclaim the painful tedium of Arya's training earlier in this chapter, I believe we can position the anxieties associated with consuming serial narratives as a key part of these programmes' reading strategies. The painful shocks and anxious stutterings of the cliffhanger are fundamental to its kinaesthetic reading strategies.

¹³⁴ Hagedorn, 'Doubtless To Be Continued', p. 28.

¹³⁵ Tania Modleski, 'The Search for Tomorrow in Today's Soap Operas: Notes on a Feminine Narrative Form', *Film Quarterly*, 33 (1979), 12-21 (p. 20).

¹³⁶ Patricia Mellencamp, *High Anxiety: Catastrophe, Scandal, Age and Comedy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1992), p. 80.

The final episode of *Lost*'s first season, 'Exodus Part Three' (1:25), ends with Jack and Locke gazing down into the open hatch, having finally destroyed the door with dynamite. As Locke and Jack peer into the hatch, the camera slowly tracks away from their faces and down into the depths of the hatch, a movement that parallels the retreat of the audience from the text. This cliffhanger was powerful enough to sustain debate across the summer hiatus, with fans furiously speculating on what was in the hatch.¹³⁷ Yet when season two returned, the show effectively took three episodes to properly resolve this cliffhanger. 'Man of Science, Man of Faith' (2:1) depicts the hatch descent from Jack's point of view, ending with Jack encountering Desmond (Henry Ian Cusik) with a gun to Locke's head. 'Adrift' (2:2) shows the same events from the perspective of Kate (Evangeline Lilly) and Locke, both filling in some of the gaps and repeating some of the same sequences from the previous episode, before ending at the same point in time. 'Orientation' (2:3) opens with a third repetition of the scene between Jack and Desmond in the hatch, prolonging the resolution of the cliffhanger even further. This drawn-out resolution evokes a sense of frustration, tedium, and anxiety, and stretches the cliffhanger to its absolute breaking point.

The sense of frustrated movement is most evident in the middle episode of this three-episode sequence, 'Adrift' (2:2). The opening scene takes place in the aftermath of the explosion on the raft, which was an additional cliffhanger in 'Exodus Part Three' (1:25). It begins with the sound of lapping water over a black screen, before showing Sawyer (Josh Holloway) violently surfacing and thrashing in the sea. The camera stays with Sawyer as he treads water, saves Michael from drowning and hauls him upon a piece of flotsam. The camera is positioned just in front of Sawyer's face, mirroring his own treading motion as it falls above and below the line of the water (Figures 2.20-2.21). This scene evokes anxiety through its lack of distance, as we share Sawyer's sense of disorientation and struggle to keep atop the water. A sense of claustrophobic proximity

¹³⁷ As Jon Lachonis and Amy Johnston remember, '[t]he hiatus between seasons 1 and 2 became the "What's in the Hatch" summer.' See Lachonis and Johnston, *Lost Ate My Life: The Inside Story of a Fandom Like No Other* (Toronto: ECW Press, 2008), p. 48.

persists throughout the episode, which revolves around Michael and Sawyer's arguments as they drift on the open sea. These scenes mostly occur in tight shot-reverse-shot



Figure 2.20 Sawyer thrashes as he struggles to stay afloat in the open water.



Figure 2.21 The camera sinks below the water, mirroring Sawyer's kinaesthetic experience.

compositions, and the empty void of the sea at night removes any sense of deep space. This feeds back into the repetitive nature of the concurrent hatch storyline, which, just like the raft, seems to be unable to make any kind of forward progress. Interestingly, work on anxiety tends to conceptualise it in terms of two opposing directions – forward extension and frozen segmentation, the same two rhythms that I earlier suggested characterise both seriality and movement. For Vivian Sobchack, anxiety is about being arrested, stuck in place, and unable to extend oneself,¹³⁸ yet for Eugenie Brinkema, anxiety is the sense of extending on forever into nothingness.¹³⁹ To some extent, then, the particular affective structure of anxiety – a structure that has kinaesthetic connotations – is embedded within the dual movements of serial narration itself. The sequence clearly invites us to experience our serial anxieties through the kinaesthetics of the scene, in which endless deferral is linked and expressed through the movement of a body treading water, and the only movement is that of the endless middle.

It is perhaps fitting that 'Adrift' (2:2) was criticised for focusing on character and emotion rather than plot progression. 'There wasn't much forward movement', complained *Entertainment Weekly*'s Jeff Jensen;¹⁴⁰ *Vulture*'s Michael Alan Connelly called

¹³⁸ Vivian Sobchack, *Carnal Thoughts: Embodiment and Moving Image Culture* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2004), p. 23.

¹³⁹ Eugenie Brinkema, *The Forms of the Affects* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 215.

¹⁴⁰ Jeff Jensen, "'Lost': Michael treads water; Locke goes deeper", *Entertainment Weekly*, 29 September 2005 <<http://www.ew.com/recap/lost-michael-treads-water-locke-goes-deeper>>

it ‘plodding’ and ‘pointless’ as ‘the story grinds to a halt’;¹⁴¹ and *Screener*’s Ryan McGee, in a retrospective review, makes the important point that its structure, ‘with the plot oozing forth like a garden snail unsure of its destination’, works far better on DVD than when broadcast live.¹⁴² Yet just as critics missed the point of Arya’s training montages, these critics also ignore the fact that such plodding, slow movements may be exactly how we are supposed to read this episode. By using its formal properties to emphasise the anxious and tedious feelings of deferred closure, feelings expressed through the embodied qualities of movement, *Lost* again points to the preferred kinaesthetic readings embedded within the very structure of serial narration itself.

Reading kinaesthetically in the reaction video

While the televised portion of the vast narrative is halted by the cliffhanger, the broader narrative universe continues to exist and be encountered by audiences, particularly through various paratexts. As I explored earlier in this chapter, many of these paratexts directly encourage participation, inviting audiences to continue to navigate the world of the vast narrative in very obviously kinaesthetic ways. For Sharon-Marie Ross, such invitations are particularly crucial for serial fiction, in which the regular gaps in storytelling ask the audience to ‘become a part of the story by *continuing its trajectory themselves*’ (emphasis added).¹⁴³ Ross suggests that vast serial narratives usually involve a form of what she calls ‘obscured participation’, in which ‘any invitation to participate resides primarily in the narrative structure and content of the show itself’.¹⁴⁴ In this sense, Ross sets up a framework in which audience participation in the vast narrative (a participation that largely operates through paratextual engagement between episodes) involves continuing the trajectories and movements of its narrational structure. I have already explored how this operates through the kinaesthetics of navigable space. Yet if, as

¹⁴¹ Michael Allen Connelly, ‘Lost’s 20 Most Pointless Episodes’, *Vulture*, 18 May 2010 <http://www.vulture.com/2010/05/the_twenty_most_pointless_epis/slideshow/2/>

¹⁴² Ryan McGee, “Lost”: Adrift’, *Screener*, 20 August 2008 <<http://screenertv.com/news-features/lost-adrift/>>

¹⁴³ Sharon Marie Ross, *Beyond the Box: Television and the Internet* (Malden: Blackwell, 2008), p. 24.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

I have been arguing, kinaesthetic dynamics are part of the structure of seriality itself, then paratextual participation might involve a specific engagement with the experiences of serial narration. To quote Ross, paratexts' 'continuing trajectories' might align with the particular moving qualities of seriality.

As a way to explore these questions, I now turn to examine the phenomenon of the *Game of Thrones* reaction video, in which audiences film themselves and/or their family and friends reacting to key scenes from the series. I am considering the reaction video as popular and highly visible example of audience-produced paratexts. Like the paratexts I discussed earlier, it offers a space for overtly embodied engagement with the kinaesthetics of the narrative; and like these other paratexts, it stands as a site through which preferred reading strategies are negotiated and accessed. Consequently, I believe that the reaction video can tell us something about how the narrational patterns of seriality might encourage embodied, kinaesthetic readings.

In its simplest form, a reaction video depicts people reacting to an external stimulus of some kind. They tend to focus on reactions to screen media, such as film trailers, television episodes, moments in video games or viral videos. The aim of the video is to record an amusingly extreme response, and so the screen texts within the videos tend to be particularly shocking, disgusting, scary, or thrilling. The videos are then uploaded onto video-sharing websites such as YouTube, where they circulate widely. One compilation video of reaction shots to the Red Wedding sequence,¹⁴⁵ at the end of 'The Rains of Castamere' (3:9), has been viewed more than twelve million times.¹⁴⁶ Early *Game of Thrones* reaction videos involved audience members filming their friends and family watching particularly shocking moments of the series, but most are now produced by individuals filming their own reactions with webcams. This is both a result of the rise in popularity of the videos, but also directly relates to *Game of Thrones*'s status as an

¹⁴⁵ The Red Wedding is the name given to one of the series' most shocking moments, in which Robb (Richard Madden), Catelyn (Michelle Fairley), Talisa (Oona Chaplin) and all the Stark bannermen are murdered at the hand of the Frey family during the wedding of Edmure Tully (Tobias Menzies) and Roslin Frey (Alexandra Dowling).

¹⁴⁶ Horrordardan, 'Game of Thrones: Red Wedding Reactions Compilation', YouTube, 3 June 2013. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=78juOpTM3tE>>

adaptation. Audience members who have read the novels (or are at least aware of the plot developments) were able to anticipate which sections of the television text would be particularly shocking for their unsuspecting friends and family. Yet today, when the television adaptation has outpaced the novels, there are no longer two categories of audience members. Consequently, reaction videos are produced with the *expectation* that shocking events will occur, particularly at the ends of the episodes, due to the audience's familiarity with the conventions and rhythms of the serial narrative.

In this sense, reaction videos may tell us something about the persistence of seriality as an affective and kinaesthetic structure in the contemporary televisual context. *Game of Thrones* reaction videos tend not to specify the particular format of the viewing experience. While many are likely recorded at the time of broadcast, others may be using on-demand services or illegal download. Jason Jacobs demonstrates how digital television services promote and market themselves as free from various forms of interruption, such as advertisements or the gaps of serial narration.¹⁴⁷ Yet he astutely notes that despite such marketing rhetoric, digital television simply transforms who has control over television's interruptions, rather destroying the segmentation of the medium entirely.¹⁴⁸ Interruption here is directed by the emotions and desires of the audience rather than the imperatives of industry or broadcasters. In a similar vein, I would argue that the kinaesthetics of seriality (such as the embodied logics of its cliffhangers and deferred resolutions) continue to exist irrespective of whether they are encountered during broadcast television, streaming services, or DVD box sets. By making the reaction to serial narrative elements a paratext – a reaction that tends to be dramatically corporeal and kinaesthetic – the *Game of Thrones* reaction video foregrounds kinaesthetic affect as crucial to the ways we make sense of serial narration.

Reaction videos exist within a highly self-reflexive loop: they reflect upon the experience of spectatorship, they promote further spectatorship, and they lend themselves to frequent parodies or endless recursivity, in which people react to reaction

¹⁴⁷ Jacobs, 'Television, Interrupted', p. 257.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 260.

videos. In this sense, I believe we can read the reaction video not simply as a means of revealing how audiences respond to television, but as a way to access the *preferred reading strategy* for these programmes. In a similar way to critical reviews, reaction videos take personal responses to television and re-distribute them for wider consumption. Many reaction videos are edited together into ‘supercuts’, which show multiple reactions to the one scene, such as the Red Wedding and Jon Snow’s death in ‘Mother’s Mercy’ (5:10). The supercut allows us to easily trace the similarities in the various reactions, and so clearly offers a preferred response to the televised moment. The Red Wedding supercut draws attention to the way audiences respond to the violence on screen through their bodies: flinching, covering their eyes, and leaping out of their chairs.¹⁴⁹ The supercut of Jon’s death¹⁵⁰ similarly focuses on particular gestural and bodily responses: audiences show an initial relatively blank gaze, a gasp of horror and a jump of shock when Jon is first stabbed, further gasps, gestures, and comments as he continues to be stabbed, before concluding in dazed postures and expressions of shock or anger (Figure 2.22). The internal



Figure 2.22 Kinaesthetic reactions to Jon Snow’s death.

repetition of particular gestures and movements within these videos clearly suggests that such embodied responses are the dominant, or preferred, means of responding to

¹⁴⁹ See Horrorcirdan, ‘Game of Thrones: Red Wedding Reactions Compilation’.

¹⁵⁰ AdikTheOne, ‘Jon Snow, Season 5 Finale - Reactions Compilation (24 Reactions) Game of Thrones’, YouTube, 15 June 2015. <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f6ZY4VmIH4I&t=81s>>

television. By paratextually circulating kinaesthetic readings of these key moments, the reaction video allows them to stand as the proper readings of these programmes.

Yet for something to stand as a preferred reading, it must invite us to identify with it, to see it as a useful site through which to model our own interpretations, affects, and sensations. The reaction video, in contrast, may seem to invite us to laugh *at* the audiences we see, rather than to feel *with* them in a kind of kinaesthetic empathy. In the only academic study of reaction videos to date, Jason Middleton argues that they demand an affective disjunction between the two audiences – the reacting audience onscreen, and those of us watching that reaction.¹⁵¹ While the reacting audience cries, screams, and cowers, we simply laugh. Consequently, he claims that reaction videos ‘privilege the affective experience of spectatorship at the expense of “recognition and responsibility” towards the subjects of the videos themselves’.¹⁵² Yet I would argue that there *is* a strong sense of recognition involved in the experience of watching a reaction video. One of the repeated sentiments in the comments on these videos comes from people who recognise themselves in the reactions: ‘That girl in the blanket is me’; ‘a part of me just died with them’; ‘I reacted in the same way as the old guy’; ‘Not gonna lie I was everyone of this people [sic]’. Importantly, many combine this self-recognition with a sense of humour: one comment states ‘I reacted the same as the guy at 2:23 haha’, and another agrees that ‘My reaction can be summed up by the guy at 2:23 lmao’. Both of these comments conclude with a statement of laughter, suggesting that while Middleton’s affective disjunction may exist, humour and laughter do not necessarily preclude a sense of recognition or a feeling of inclusion. Here, we see audiences using reaction videos to negotiate their own responses to the programme, identifying with a dominant reading strategy as a means of access to the *Game of Thrones* audience community.

In inviting us to recognise our own bodies and our own affects in response to television, the reaction video clearly encourages a sense of collective community. Like I

¹⁵¹ Jason Middleton, *Documentary’s Awkward Turn: Cringe Comedy and Media Spectatorship* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 114.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 134.

suggested in my earlier discussion of performance, intimacy, and reality, then, we need to consider how a kinaesthetic reading strategy might relate to specifically televisual features – in this case, community and liveness. In an article on reaction videos, Laura Hudson suggests that they act as a substitute for a lost sense of liveness.

‘Although DVRs may have fragmented audiences from one unified whole watching at a single time to a far more chronologically scattered experience, TV is still a significantly shared phenomenon—or at least, many of us still want it to be. When we watch popular shows like *Game of Thrones*, on some level we share that experience with millions of other people, and reaction videos are a comforting reminder that we cry and scream and grieve with them as well.’¹⁵³

However, I would argue that rather than recovering a *lost* sense of liveness, the reaction video takes up a new orientation to this quintessential feature of the medium. Richard Grusin argues that we live in an ‘anticipatory temporality’,¹⁵⁴ in which ‘immediacy is less about the experience of what is happening on screen at any particular moment than about the anticipation of what is going to happen in the immediate future’.¹⁵⁵ Here, Grusin offers a way to rethink the presence and immediacy of television: not as something that exists solely in the *now*, but as something that gestures beyond itself to the future.

Reaction videos aim to capture a very particular expected response, and can be understood as what Grusin terms an ‘anticipatory gesture’.¹⁵⁶ Much of the pleasure of the reaction video derives from our expectations of movement, from the way the repetition within the video primes us to wait for the particular jerks and jolts on the faces and bodies of the audience members. These pleasures draw from the same source as the cliffhanger – what Erin Manning terms of the ‘elasticity of the almost’,¹⁵⁷ and what we can understand as kinaesthetic affect, or the particular anticipation of movement. Once again, this attests

¹⁵³ Laura Hudson, ‘What’s Behind our Obsession with *Game of Thrones* Reaction Videos’, *Wired*, 6 May 2014 <<http://www.wired.com/2014/06/game-of-thrones-reaction-videos/>>

¹⁵⁴ Richard Grusin, *Premediation: Affect and Mediality after 9/11* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), p. 129.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 129.

¹⁵⁷ Manning, *Relationscapes*, p. 9.

to the persistence of seriality as an affective and kinaesthetic structure in the contemporary vast narrative. In the context of a kinaesthetic reading strategy – one that revolves around the gestural power of movement – we may need to reframe televisual immediacy as based not in the aesthetics of liveness, but in the kinaesthetics of anticipation.

Such a reconfiguration has implications for how we understand the television audience. While early *Game of Thrones* reaction videos were produced by people filming their unsuspecting friends, most of the videos are now produced by individuals or groups using webcams. Audience members expect shocking events to happen during *Game of Thrones*, and so record themselves with the expectation that something will happen, and that their reaction will be worthy of being viewed by others. Of course, some of these videos are criticised according to their authenticity – namely, whether the reactions are staged or genuine. However, I would argue that determining whether the reactions are ‘real’ or not is besides the point – what is important is that these reactions are the way in which individuals understand and seek access to membership within the *Game of Thrones* audience community. To return once more to Misha Kavka’s work on affective realities, she argues that what she calls the ‘*affective productivity* of televisual presence’ produces a ‘community of engagement’.¹⁵⁸ In the reaction video, television’s kinaesthetic affects produce a community that is organised around a preferred mode of engagement with the television text. Like the fan tourism practices I discussed earlier in this chapter, it is the explicit, deliberate performance of a kinaesthetic reading of the text that is the key to our identities as audience members and fans. The reaction video shows us that it is the kinaesthetic and affective structures of seriality, not the spatiotemporal specificities of broadcasting, which holds the contemporary televisual community together.

Evaluating endings

¹⁵⁸ Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy*, p. 5.

Throughout this chapter I have been skirting around the question of evaluation. How do critics and theorists talk about television? How might these assumptions be culturally biased against the embodied dynamics of a kinaesthetic reading strategy? Part of the problem with our existing evaluative frameworks is that they presume that a text is finished, or complete, or at least neatly bounded as a discrete object. In my review of literature I outlined how work on television aesthetics makes the same presumptions, despite the fact that the favoured texts of these theorists tend to be messy, incomplete serial narratives. Michael Newman and Elana Levine note that the literature on quality television demonstrates a 'repeated valuation of the serialised narrative that successfully concludes' as opposed to the never-ending stories of the feminised genres of soap operas, again reflecting particular masculinised taste distinctions.¹⁵⁹ Once again, this is an attempt to reconcile the serial television text into the good, 'whole' object worthy of aesthetic analysis. Once again, the vast narratives of serial television are ill-served by such a framework. Yet once again, I would suggest, the idea of a kinaesthetic reading strategy might offer a way to approach this question without recourse to the value-laden judgements of aesthetic theory.

In the final section of this chapter, I want to draw out the issues of quality and evaluation that have been threaded through my discussion. Thus far I have been focusing on how kinaesthesia might allow us to reconsider how the vast narrative appeals to us, in terms of questions of the ordinary, the real, and the experience of consuming a serial text that is forever in motion. Yet what happens when the movement of the text stops? For even the vast narrative must reach an end at some point, although with varying levels of resolution. Some are cancelled abruptly, such as *FlashForward* (ABC, 2009-2010) and *Terra Nova* (Fox 2010), leaving little narrative resolution; others deliberately work towards a defined ending, such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB 1997-2001, UPN 2002-2003), *The Wire*, and, of course, *Lost*. Of my case studies in this chapter, *Lost* is the only one that has completed its televised narrative arc, and thus offers a unique and interesting insight into

¹⁵⁹ Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television* (New York: Routledge, 2012), p. 90.

these questions. Jason Mittell argues that many serial endings (*Lost* included) tend towards metafictional storytelling as a way of working through their own demise. ‘This strategy highlights a series’ own storytelling strategies’, he suggests, ‘and frequently offers moments that address the audience more directly than is typical within otherwise realist modes of narration.’¹⁶⁰ Following Mittell’s argument, we would expect the season finale of *Lost* to show some degree of reflection on its own kinaesthetic storytelling and reading strategies, again making it a useful case study with which to end this chapter.

Lost concluded with a two-part episode titled, rather unimaginatively, ‘The End’ (6:17-18), which aired in the US on May 23rd, 2010. The episode wraps up the two parallel timelines that had been weaved through season six – the on-island events and the events in the ‘flash-sideways’, which seemed to depict a parallel universe in which the characters lived out different lives. On the island, Jack and Desmond destroy the ‘Heart’ of the island in order to kill the villain known as ‘the Man in Black’, and Jack stays on the island to ensure that the other characters can finally leave. In the flash-sideways world, each of the characters has a revelation in which they recognise one another and remember their time on the island. The episode concludes with an extended sequence in a church, where we learn that the flash-sideways world is a post-death purgatory constructed by the characters so they could find one another before travelling on to the afterlife.

‘The End’ inspired highly polarised reactions from fans and critics. While some praised the emotional satisfaction of seeing the characters reach the end of their arcs, the more vocal majority were highly critical of the resolutions (or lack thereof) to the key mysteries of the series. In particular, the poorly executed and confused idea of the ‘Heart’ of the island – essentially a pool of glowing water – was a huge disappointment for fans who had spent years speculating on the island’s true purpose and identity. *The Telegraph* suggests that audience members who sought ‘intellectual stimulation were largely let down’, before disparagingly describing the series as more akin to a soap opera than a

¹⁶⁰ Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), p. 324.

drama.¹⁶¹ Emily Nussbaum somewhat scathingly stated that ‘we got cheesy temple vamping and a bereavement Holodeck. [*Lost*] became a show about placating, even sedating, fans, convincing them that, in the absence of anything coherent or challenging, love was enough.’¹⁶² Here, we can see the clear value judgements of the aesthetic analysis of quality television, in which intellectual stimulation and narrative coherency are privileged above emotional (or embodied) engagement. I do not necessarily wish to enter into this debate, for I believe it is unproductive and ends up reproducing the very distinction I am trying to critique in this thesis. There is only either narrative coherency or emotional satisfaction, these critiques seem to say, once more pitting the intellect and the sensations, or the mind and the body, against one another. Rather, returning to Mittell’s idea of the metafictional qualities of serial endings, I want to consider how narrative and character resolution operated on a kinaesthetic level, or at least were encouraged to be read through such a sense of kinaesthetic resolution.

Each of the flash-sideways revelations is triggered by an action with a particular physical parallel on the island. Locke wriggles his toes in the same way as he does in ‘Walkabout’ (1:4), and the sensation of regaining feeling to his legs triggers a montage of memories of his time on the island (Figures 2.23-2.24). Sun (Yunjin Kim) receives an



Figure 2.23 Locke wriggles his toes in the flash-sideways world...



Figure 2.24 ...triggering a memory of performing the same movement on the island.

ultrasound from Juliet (Elizabeth Mitchell) in a direct parallel to a similar scene on the island (in season three’s ‘D.O.C.’ 3:18). Claire (Emilie de Ravin) and Kate remember their lives through their shared experience of childbirth, where Kate helps deliver Claire’s

¹⁶¹ Nick Collins, ‘Lost’ finale disappoints reviewers’, *The Telegraph*, 24 May 2010.

<<http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/tvandradio/7758625/Lost-finale-disappoints-reviewers.html>>

¹⁶² Emily Nussbaum, ‘A Disappointed Fan is Still a Fan’, *New York Magazine*, 28 May 2010.

<<http://nymag.com/arts/tv/reviews/66293/index2.html>>

baby much like she did in 'Do No Harm' (1:20). In each of these sequences, rapid editing cuts between the flash-sideways scenes and the earlier scenes on the island, drawing attention to their shared compositional qualities. Yet these similarities in framing and shot length are less important than their kinaesthetic similarities. It is particular gestural moments, in which bodies repeat movements and ways of existing within space, which are the catalyst for unlocking the memories of the characters. We might call this an especially kinaesthetic form of *déjà vu*. The episode thus suggests that the preferred way to access the recognisable narrative world of *Lost* (i.e. its serial history) is through a kinaesthetic recognition. In this sense the episode does seem to offer a metafictional commentary on its own storytelling and engagement strategies, by explicitly presenting its characters kinaesthetically making sense of the (story)world. Importantly, this is neither simply narrational nor emotional, but demands both knowledge of how the multiple storylines of the characters have intersected in the past, as well as being highly affectively charged. 'The End' thus explicitly suggests that a kinaesthetic reading strategy, as something that blurs the distinctions between affect and interpretation, and between experience and form, holds the key to understanding the vast narrative of *Lost*.

Yet the question remains as to how we evaluate the ending of the series. How do we avoid returning to terms that presume that completeness and coherency are the only valuable traits for a particular text? In her work on the aesthetic value of unpleasant emotions, Sianne Ngai suggests that 'our encounters with astonishing but also fatiguing works...call for a different way of thinking about what it means to be aesthetically overpowered'.¹⁶³ Ngai's astute recognition of the way aesthetic objects can be exhausting clearly aligns with the massive serial structures of the vast narrative, and the often-fraught experiences of suspense, anxiety, and tedium that are embedded within their form. In her work on the database, Rosamund Davies links closure with a sense of exhaustion, suggesting that it operates spatially rather than linearly, and arises from 'a sense of having explored and *exhausted* the possible connections, having *travelled* all

¹⁶³ Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007), p. 270.

pathways' (emphasis added).¹⁶⁴ Davies' appeal to a metaphor of exhausting, fatiguing travel provides a key insight into how closure might operate in the kinaesthetics of the vast narrative, with its navigable spaces and its serial momentum. To answer Ngai's call for a different frame of thought, in televisual kinaesthetics, the aesthetically overpowering experience becomes a *kinaesthetically* overpowering one, or the bittersweet exhaustion one feels after a long period of travel.

Much like the revelations in the 'flash-sideways', the final scene of the series is a direct parallel to the opening scene in 'Pilot Part One' (1:1). The scene kinaesthetically reverses the earlier sequence: in 'Pilot Part One', Jack wakes up confused and injured amongst the bamboo in the jungle; in 'The End', a wounded Jack walks through the bamboo, before collapsing and closing his eyes. He walks slowly, in contrast to his frenetic run in the initial episode. At one point he pauses to catch his breath, standing next to the very same shoe we saw in the very first scene. Both the shoe and Jack's body are torn and battered, worn and exhausted. Dimitris Eleftheriotis suggests that the travel narrative in the cinema uses the body of the traveller as the 'site of inscription of the materiality of the journey';¹⁶⁵ in television's vast narratives, the body becomes inscribed with the material traces of serial exhaustion. Like the revelation sequences, the impact of this scene is based in the kinaesthetic parallels between the beginning and ending of the series. Our connection to the body in motion once again becomes the catalyst for the affective resonances of serial narration, with its repetitions and long histories.

There is something particularly powerful about a narrative that ends by returning to where it began. For philosopher Michel Serres, we may need a new kind of travel narrative that celebrates what he calls an 'interesting itinerary, one...not deliberate or sure of itself, but rather anxious, off balance and relentless'.¹⁶⁶ Such an 'interesting

¹⁶⁴ Rosamund Davies, 'Digital Intimacies: Aesthetic and Affective Strategies in the Production and Use of Online Video', in *Ephemeral Media: Transitory Screen Culture from Television to Youtube*, ed. by Paul Grainge (London: BFI, 2013), pp. 214-27 (pp. 214-15).

¹⁶⁵ Dimitris Eleftheriotis, *Cinematic Journeys: Film and Movement* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), p. 99.

¹⁶⁶ Michel Serres, *The Five Senses: A Philosophy of Mingled Bodies*, trans. by Margaret Sankey and Peter Cowley (London: Continuum, 2008), p. 271.

itinerary' may perfectly describe the navigable spaces of serial vast narratives, and the ambivalent pleasures of television, which include the banal and the irritating as much as the classically aesthetic. While 'The End' may not satisfactorily resolve itself on the level of intellectual mystery, kindling irritation amongst many fans, it does evoke a strong sense of having travelled all the available pathways, returning to circle back to its original departure point. The closure it gives us operates more through a sense of exhaustion than of tying up loose ends, an exhaustion kinaesthetically communicated through the bodies of its characters. Rather than focusing on the aesthetics of the destination, then, our evaluation of serial television might be better off based within the kinaesthetics of the journey.

Conclusion

In the spirit of *Lost*, perhaps we should end by returning to where we began this chapter, with Daenerys lost in the desert, attempting to chart her way out through the bodies of her Khalasar. In the following episode, 'The Night Lands' (2:2), Rakharo's (Elyes Gabel) horse returns without a rider; or more accurately, without the *body* of the rider. Rakharo has been decapitated, and his head returned to Daenerys in a saddlebag. The head alone, it seems, with its visual senses and cognitive capacities, is thus incapable of properly mapping the spaces of the vast narrative.

In this chapter I have explored how television's vast narratives invite and encourage a kinaesthetic reading strategy. I have attempted to show how such close attention to these embodied readings does not need to come at the expense of discussions of what makes television the medium it is – elements of the ordinary, the intimate, and the real. Indeed, I have suggested that many of the key features of television – intimacy, ordinariness, reality, mobility, seriality, liveness, and community – are experienced and accessed through the kinaesthetic dynamics of the body. The vast narrative both addresses us as embodied beings and relies upon our embodied experience for its narrative coherency and its affective power. It uses the kinaesthetics of the performing

body as the core of its narrative engine. It exploits the kinaesthetic experience of travel and navigation as a means to bring coherency to its rapidly spreading extensions. And it embeds the embodied experience of movement at the heart of its serial narration, ensuring that the quintessential affects of seriality are experienced through their embodied qualities.

Yet Daenerys's kinaesthetic plotting of her surrounds raises important questions regarding power. Which bodies can chart a course through the world, and which bodies must remain fixed in place? Which bodies can command the movements of others, and which are forced to move in ways they may not desire? In this scene, the women remain behind while the men go out to map the world; yet at the same time, the white characters dictate the movements of the characters of colour, and stand to benefit from the violence that befalls their bodies. Any discussion of how our readings of television's kinaesthetics would thus be remiss without also considering the political implications of kinaesthesia, implications I will explore in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: GENDER AND NORMATIVE KINAESTHESIA

The opening scene of *Outlander*'s (Starz, 2014–) third episode, 'The Way Out' (1:3), depicts a flashback in which protagonist Claire Beauchamp Randall Fraser (Caitriona Balfe) leaves for the frontlines of the Second World War. Claire is farewelled by her husband, Frank Randall (Tobias Menzies), who remains in England throughout the war as part of his work with MI6. Claire and Frank wear identical military uniforms: peaked caps, buttoned and belted jackets, and collared shirts with ties (Figures 3.1-3.2). They march briskly down the train platform, perfectly in step with one another, intermittently silhouetted against the smoke of the train. The scene thus seems to offer us two equal



Figure 3.1 Claire and Frank walk together down the train platform.



Figure 3.2 Identical uniforms, equivalent bodies.

bodies that share the same patterns and capacities of movement. However, this sense of equivalence is only comprehensible through the gendered meanings attached to Frank and Claire's bodily comportment and movement. The scene does not remove gender to present two neutral bodies (for neutral is always equivalent to male in a patriarchal society), but shifts Claire into the *masculine* position: her brisk, confident gait and uniform connote the male world of the military. After the train whistle sounds, Claire says 'as they say, that's my cue', and boards the train. Frank approaches the window, responding 'this is backwards. I should be the one leaving for the frontlines.' This dialogue references the standard trope of the wartime train station farewell, relying upon our generic knowledge

to understand the ‘backwardness’ of watching the woman leave for the front.¹ Yet it also highlights that there are certain normalised and naturalised cues that structure our movement through the world and, more importantly, that these cues have gendered implications that become all the more visible when reversed. By intersecting generic conventions with gendered forms of bodily movement, the scene asks us to glean its meaning and impact through how it plays with normative kinaesthesia.

This chapter seeks to unpack the ways in which television’s kinaesthetic reading strategies might interact with normative structures of movement and space. To be a body in movement is to be a *recognisable* body in movement, legible in both form and experience. Yet discussions of both television and kinaesthesia often obscure the power dynamics through which bodies are recognised and reiterated as normative forms. Firstly, as I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, part of the explanatory power of kinaesthesia derives from the term’s flexibility, which gives it the power to encompass multiple forms of sensory and spatial awareness, and to support both metaphorical and material forms of descriptive analysis. However, such sweeping gestures always end up sweeping something under the rug, for to talk through embodied analogies without talking about embodied differences is to erect a veneer of universality over the specificities of corporeal existence. Discussions of television engagement also operate according to the same logics of erasure. Mimi White concisely recognises that ‘television proposes modes of subjectivity that can be conceptualised as fluid and provisional, and yet simultaneously refer to conventional and fixed positions in terms of class, gender, and race.’² Following White, I am acutely aware that my discussion of television’s kinaesthetic reading strategies must consider how such readings relate to fixed understandings of identity. If, as I have been arguing throughout this thesis, contemporary television drama

¹ A recent example of this trope occurs in season two of *Downton Abbey* (ITV, 2010-2015), in the scene in which Mary Crawley (Michelle Dockery) farewells love interest Matthew (Dan Stevens) as he leaves for World War One.

² Mimi White, *Tele-Advising: Therapeutic Discourse in American Television* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1992), p. 20.

invites readings that rely upon embodied forms of knowledge, meaning, and sensation, then it must negotiate and reiterate recognisable forms of embodiment. In other words, a preferred reading strategy of kinaesthesia necessarily intersects with preferred kinaesthetic norms.

While the normative structuring of kinaesthesia operates across many different dimensions (such as class, ethnicity, sexuality, and able-bodiedness), I have limited my discussion in this chapter to gender and desire, both of which have particular theoretical relevance to serial television drama. Firstly, thinking through television tends to involve thinking through gender, for as a domestic medium, the organisation and reception of television is ordered by logics of gender difference. Television studies in the late 1980s and 1990s was highly concerned with gender politics, exploring the ways in which theories of the distracted, glancing viewer, the presumed passivity of the domestic viewing context, and the link between television and idle consumption all drew from a gendered value hierarchy, one which associates television with femininity in order to paint both as lower and less worthy.³ Secondly, the organisation of serial narrative is often understood through patterns of gendered desire. The experience of consuming serial fiction, with its routine familiarity and unresolved endings, has largely been coded as feminine. Jennifer Hayward notes that the features of the soap opera, such as melodrama, deferred closure, and a focus on intimate relations, have been labelled ‘essentially female’, standing in opposition to the goal-oriented teleology of male-dominated literary traditions.⁴ Scholarly debates about the gendering of the medium continue today, mainly in debates surrounding the link between television’s growing legitimisation and its

³ See Lynne Joyrich, *Re-Viewing Reception: Television, Gender, and Postmodern Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1996); Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992); White, *Tele-Advising*.

⁴ Jennifer Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures: Active Audiences and Serial Fiction* (Lexington: The University Press of Kentucky, 1997), p. 18.

masculinisation.⁵ The programmes usually grouped together under the label ‘quality television’ employ serial narration to tell stories about tortured male protagonists, a deliberate attempt to distinguish themselves from the romantic and familial focus of the soap opera. To some extent, this narrative of the gendering of television is as obscuring as the fallacy of the neutral body, for, as John Caldwell argues, ‘a number of hypermasculinist televisual tendencies’ have been present in television since its inception.⁶ Yet it does reinforce the fact that evaluations of television have always operated according to a gendered logic of distinction; as Michael Newman and Elana Levine argue, the ‘aestheticised formats of television are those aligning with dominant class and gender identities’.⁷

So far in this thesis I have been arguing that kinaesthesia functions as a preferred reading strategy for many contemporary television dramas, or a means through which television tells its stories and invites itself to be read. Gender has also been understood as a similar kind of interpretative frame: Lynn Joyrich argues that gender does not simply come into play as a subject matter or target audience of individual programs, but is television’s ‘classificatory strategy, a structuring system...constituted through its terms of enunciation and address.’⁸ I would argue that it is *serial* television that allows us to trace such gendered reading strategies most clearly, for it acts, as both Robyn Warhol and Jason Mittell claim in relation to the soap opera and ‘complex’ television respectively, as a ‘narrative technology of gender.’⁹ Yet if watching serial television seems to ask us to negotiate questions of gendered spaces, gendered bodies and gendered desire, then it must also demand that we navigate the point where bodies, spaces, and affects all meet –

⁵ See Michael Z. Newman and Elana Levine, *Legitimizing Television* (New York: Routledge, 2012); and Rachel Moseley, Helen Wheatley and Rachel Wood (eds.), *Television for Women: New Directions* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2017).

⁶ John Thornton Caldwell, *Televisuality* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 1995), p. 27.

⁷ Newman and Levine, *Legitimizing Television*, p. 144.

⁸ Joyrich, *Re-Viewing Reception*, p. 17.

⁹ Robyn R. Warhol, *Having a Good Cry: Effeminate Feelings and Pop-Culture Forms* (Columbus: The Ohio State University Press, 2003), p. 118; and Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), p. 232.

kinaesthesia. In this sense, I believe that gender and kinaesthesia interact in the parallel ways in which they organise the meanings we make from television, and must be theorised together.

This chapter explores these ideas through two recent television series – *Outlander* and *Transparent* (Amazon 2014–). Both series focus around a female protagonist,¹⁰ have an investment in exploring how gendered power dynamics play out across the body, and have received much critical attention for their explorations of desire and embodiment, particularly from a feminist perspective.¹¹ In this sense, both can be read as being concerned with issues of gender politics (although with varying degrees of explicitness), and are a useful site for exploring how normative ideas of gendered bodies and gendered desires are reiterated and/or resisted. *Outlander* is a British-American co-production, and is based on a series of novels by American author Diana Gabaldon. The series focuses on Claire Beauchamp Randall Fraser, an English nurse who is transported back in time while travelling around Scotland with her husband Frank in 1945, arriving at the height of the Jacobite revolution in 1743. The time-travelling narrative structure gives the series the ability to overtly explore changes and challenges to normative forms of embodiment, particularly gendered embodiment and desire. Created by Ronald D. Moore, known for his work on *Battlestar Galactica* (Sci-Fi, 2004-2009) and *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine* (CBS, 1993-1999), the series airs on the Starz cable network in the US and began airing on More4

¹⁰ My use of the words ‘female’ and ‘women’ here do not intend to use sexual binarism as a form of essential difference. Rather, it simply seeks to reflect the fact that in dominant culture – to which serial television contributes – bodies and subjects must be gendered in order to be recognisable. A ‘female’ character one that is coded as ‘feminine’, through the use of feminine pronouns, behaviours, and other cues.

¹¹ For a scholarly discussion of *Outlander* and desire, see Helen Wheatley, *Spectacular Television: Exploring Televisual Pleasure* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016); for a discussion of the same topic in the popular press, see Maureen Ryan, “‘Outlander,’ The Wedding Episode And TV’s Sexual Revolution”, *The Huffington Post*, 29 September 2014.

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/09/29/outlander-wedding_n_5896284.html>; and Sonia Saraiya, ‘This is What the Female Gaze Looks Like: “Transparent” Returns for a Thrilling Second Season’, *Salon*, 13 December 2015.
<http://www.salon.com/2015/12/13/this_is_what_the_female_gaze_looks_like_transparent_returns_for_a_thrilling_second_season/>

in the UK in 2017, after being restricted to the Amazon Prime streaming service for its first two seasons.¹² *Transparent* is an American production for Amazon Studios, and is exclusively available through the Amazon Prime streaming service across the world. Loosely based on the experience of creator Jill Soloway (known for her film *Afternoon Delight* [2013] and her work as a writer on *Six Feet Under* [HBO, 2001-2005]), it tells the story of the Pfefferman family after their parent comes out as transgender. As a narrative focused around Maura's (Jeffrey Tambor) gender transition, it is, unsurprisingly, also explicitly concerned with questions of normative gender embodiment.

Like my case studies in the previous chapter, both *Outlander* and *Transparent* are stories about journeys. They share the vast narrative's interest in geographical navigation: *Outlander*'s narrative of searching for desire and kinship is inextricable from the physical traversal of the Scottish landscape, and *Transparent* uses the experience of being a queer body moving through public space to question ideas of normativity. However, as well as these more literal forms of travel, both series are also invested in questions of gendered journeys, particularly in terms of navigating the norms of gender embodiment. Maura's gender transition is explicitly and repeatedly framed as a journey narrative in both the diegetic dialogue and the paratextual material. Similarly, Claire's temporal travels between eighteenth and twentieth century Scotland are presented as a gendered form of movement, as the folktales Claire hears suggest that it is only women who can travel through the mystical stones at Craigh na Dun.¹³ If *Outlander* looks towards the past to comment on femininity in the present, then *Transparent* envisions a new future and asks us to reconsider how we recognise and classify bodily form and embodied experiences. Yet like the vast narrative, both of these journeys necessarily revolve around kinaesthetic

¹² I have explored the politics surrounding *Outlander*'s distribution in the United Kingdom elsewhere. See 'On (Not) Watching *Outlander* in the United Kingdom', *Visual Culture in Britain*, 17 (2016), pp. 311-328.

¹³ Gabaldon's novels do include various male time-travellers, but so far the television programme has only explicitly presented female travellers – Claire and Geillis Duncan (Lotte Verbeek). The Gaelic song Claire hears at the end of 'The Way Out' (1:3) also presents a story of a woman.

questions of movement and spatial power, for both series show a concern with how feminine agency is negotiated through the ways in which the body moves through and occupies space. Importantly, both series also emphasise how the intersections between preferred readings and preferred embodied norms are never exact matches, but involve resistance and reconfiguration as much as reiteration. By writing their identity politics across the moving body, then, *Outlander* and *Transparent* demonstrate how serial television invites us to engage with such questions through a kinaesthetic reading strategy.

The Feminist Politics of Location

‘The body’, in Simone de Beauvoir’s famous declaration, ‘is a situation.’¹⁴ While de Beauvoir was referring to the individual corporeal experience of women, her words reflect the fact that today, the body is something of a situation for feminist theory. As a movement concerned with the ways in which systems of power intersect with the logics of sexual difference, it is no surprise that feminist theory turns strongly towards the body, the site where these two systems converge in their disciplinary and experiential force. Much of the work of feminist theory departs from the same theoretical baseline: the traditional binary in which the female body is defined against the male body as weaker and inferior, more vulnerable and irrational, and subject to uncontrollable intrusions and emanations.¹⁵ This corporeal binary not only determines various systems of social stratification, but also underpins the whole history of Western critical thought and judgements of value. Dualisms such as reason-passion, self-other, depth-surface, form-matter, and, of course, mind-body, take shape across the masculine-feminine binary, with the ‘feminine’ element marked as the inferior of the pair. Although these binaries are

¹⁴ Simone de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, trans. by Constance Borde and Sheila Malovany-Chevallier (New York: Vintage, 2009 [1949]), p. 68.

¹⁵ See Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); and Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London: Routledge, 1996).

highly contentious today, the struggle against them continues to play out across the body, shaping the ways in which gender is experienced and our understanding of what bodies can and cannot do.

Almost all feminist theory takes the body as its central point of orientation. As Barbara Brook suggests, feminist thought can be described as ‘an engagement of one sort or another, with what it means to be, and to be perceived to be, a female body.’¹⁶ For the second-wave, the negative connotations of the female body were something to be challenged and overcome: if the female body was a burden, then its materiality needed to be denied in order to give women access to the public sphere.¹⁷ Later work from the social constructivist position (particularly French feminist theorists such as Irigaray and Kristeva) argued that what needed to be challenged and resisted was not the body itself, but the connotations and values that circulated around it.¹⁸ These theorists separated sex from gender: while the sexed body was naturally pre-given, the gendered body was a cultural construction and could be discursively dismantled. This work was criticised for retaining the natural state of the sexed body; later theorists, most notably Judith Butler, contend that the sexed body itself is only ever the effect of the workings of power and discourse, and cannot be regarded as pre-existing such discursive formations.¹⁹ Butler’s work has in turn been routinely criticised for collapsing the material experience of the body into a product of language and discourse. In reaction to this, feminism’s ‘new materialism’, as prominent in the Australian school of corporeal feminism, calls for a

¹⁶ Barbara Brook, *Feminist Perspectives on the Body* (London: Longman, 1999), p. 2.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Spelman refers to this idea as ‘somatophobia’, or fear of the body. See ‘Woman as Body: Ancient and Contemporary Views’, *Feminist Studies*, 8 (1982), 109-131.

¹⁸ See Luce Irigaray, *Sexes and Genealogies*, trans. by Gillian C. Gill (New York: Columbia University Press, 1993); and Julia Kristeva, *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, trans. by Thomas Gora, Alice Jardine and Leon S. Roudiez (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991).

¹⁹ See Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York: Routledge, 1990); *Bodies That Matter: On the Discursive Limitations of ‘Sex’* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

renewed 'attention to lived, material bodies and evolving corporeal practices',²⁰ returning to emphasise the 'flesh' of feminism's fleshy texts.

To some extent, the similarities present within this scholarly trajectory are more important than the differences. Regardless of the specificities of the argument, all feminist theory places gendered body experience at its very centre, and all of it seeks to critique and improve on its predecessors through a new orientation to the body. Yet thinking and writing about the body involves thinking and writing *through* the body, meaning that feminist theory returns again and again to embodied tropes and embodied imagery. From Luce Irigaray's allegories of lips to Donna Haraway's cyborg, and from Rosi Braidotti's 'nomadic subjects' to Nirmal Puwar's 'space invaders',²¹ feminist theory speaks in a language of kinaesthesia, or embodied analogies and metaphors based in how bodies take shape and move through the world. Adrienne Rich's 1984 essay 'The Politics of Location' makes a powerful claim for such a kinaesthetic mode of feminist theorising. 'Begin...not with a continent or a country or a house', she asserts, 'but with the geography closest in - the body.'²² However, she warns against the abstraction of the term 'the body', instead proposing a 'politics of location' as a way to avoid obscuring difference and specificity under the umbrella of shared embodied existence. In order to consider what it means to have a body, she argues, one that is always marked by embodied signifiers of identity, we need to understand 'the places it has taken me, the places it has not let me go'.²³ Feminist theory thus involves thinking through and speaking through kinaesthetic ideas.

²⁰ Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman, 'Introduction: Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory', in *Material Feminisms*, ed. by Alaimo and Hekman (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2008), pp. 1-19 (p. 3).

²¹ See Luce Irigaray, 'When Our Lips Speak Together', trans. by Carolyn Burke, *Signs*, 6 (1980), pp. 69-79; Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association, 1991); Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); and Nirmal Puwar, *Space Invaders: Race, Gender and Bodies out of Place* (Oxford: Berg, 2004).

²² Adrienne Rich, *Blood, Bread and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985* (London: The Virago Press, 1987), p. 212.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 216. Rich's work can, of course, be extended to other facets of identity, such as able-bodiedness, class, or age.

If feminist theory speaks to us through embodied tropes and metaphors, then it has much to offer the analysis of texts that share the same communication strategies – the serial dramas I am concerned with in this thesis. Once again, this supports my belief that kinaesthesia and gender might work with one another in how they organise serial television. Indeed, the claims of Rich’s essay align neatly with James Hay’s 2001 article ‘Locating the Televisual.’ He argues that television is too often discussed as ‘*anything*’ or ‘*everything*’, the same universalist affliction that has plagued feminist work on the body.²⁴ Instead, Hay claims that television is a ‘sociospatial problematic’,²⁵ which ‘matters or matters differently at different sites’.²⁶ This echoes Rich’s sensitivity to the specificity of gendered experience, and her demand to constantly question ‘[w]hen, where, and under what conditions’ assertions about women are true.²⁷ Importantly, Hay also suggests that the sociospatial specificity of television is not simply a fixed location, but is embroiled in issues of mobility and access: as he concisely states, ‘[w]hat one does with TV is a matter of how one *gets to and from TV*’.²⁸ While Hay is referring to a more material kind of movement through everyday life, I believe we can extend his idea of ‘getting to and from’ television to questions of preferred reading strategies, which set up preferred means of entry and exit into a text. Together, therefore, Hay and Rich’s work asserts that any attempt to understand a politics of location, for both gender and television, must understand the intersections between bodies, space, and movement. Interrogating identity politics within television texts necessarily involves reading their kinaesthetics.

One of the key ‘sociospatial’ sites of the contemporary television landscape are what I am terming female-oriented programmes.²⁹ These programmes have female

²⁴ James Hay, ‘Locating the Televisual’, *Television & New Media*, 2 (2001), 205-34 (p. 205).

²⁵ Ibid., p. 212.

²⁶ Ibid., p. 211.

²⁷ Rich, *Blood, Bread and Poetry*, p. 214.

²⁸ Hay, ‘Locating the Televisual’, p. 215, emphasis added.

²⁹ In contrast to the strong prevalence in cable television drama that revolves around troubled men, such as *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1999-2007), *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008), *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-2015), *Deadwood* (HBO, 2006-2008), and *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008-2013), the last five years have seen a rise

protagonists, revolve around feminine-coded experiences, and engage with feminist themes and concerns. Caralyn Bolte, in her work on teen television drama, argues that series with female protagonists never simply make female experience central.³⁰ Instead, these characters tend to operate from a position on the margins, in what she terms an exiled female perspective. Citing examples such as *Veronica Mars* (UPN, 2004-2006; The CW, 2006-2007) and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB, 1997-2001, UPN, 2002-2003), she traces the ways that speaking positions for these young women always emerge from a marginal position. To some extent, the figure of the outsider is a recurrent trope of teen narratives irrespective of gender. Yet Bolte's work echoes Tania Modleski's description of soap operas as 'provid[ing] training in the "art of being off centre"', in which she argues that the interruptions and segmentation inherent in televisual flow makes the television experience a 'profoundly decentring one'.³¹ However, in specifically linking such features to the feminised genre of the soap opera and the feminine experience of juggling soap viewing with domestic demands, Modleski seems to suggest that television's decentring experiences might also be gendered (and gendering) experiences. The figure of the marginal and the decentred, then, might be crucial to female-oriented programmes more broadly, not just teen dramas or soap operas.

I argue that the 'art of being off centre' reflects a crucial dynamic of gendered kinaesthetics in serial television drama. Much work on feminine corporeality notes that women are expected to take up less space than men, relegated to the sidelines – Iris Marion Young suggests that feminine bodies do not make full use of the lateral space

of female led programmes, particularly in US network dramas such as *Homeland* (Showtime, 2011–), *Scandal* (ABC, 2012–), *How to Get Away with Murder* (ABC, 2014–), and *The Good Wife* (CBS, 2009–2016). It is worth noting that Amazon has also invested in programmes with female showrunners and female leads, such as Dana Calvo's *Good Girls Revolt* (Amazon, 2016), Jill Soloway's *I Love Dick* (Amazon, 2017), Tig Notaro's *One Mississippi* (Amazon, 2016–), and Dawn Prestwich and Nicole Yorkin's *Z: The Beginning of Everything* (Amazon, 2017–).

³⁰ Caralyn Bolte, "Normal is the Watchword": Exiling Cultural Anxieties and Defining Desire from the Margins', in *Teen Television: Essays on Programming and Fandom*, ed. by Sharon Marie Ross and Louisa Stein (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2008), pp. 93–113.

³¹ Tania Modleski, *Loving with a Vengeance: Mass Produced Fantasies for Women* (London: Routledge, 2007), p. 93.

around their bodies;³² Elizabeth Grosz describes female corporeality as ‘marginal’;³³ and Susan Bordo frames anorexia as a gendered form of anxiety about taking up space.³⁴ Marianne Wex’s photography project, *Let’s Take Back Our Space*, compellingly demonstrates this gendered kinaesthetic norm.³⁵ Wex took thousands of photographs of men and women, along with examples from magazines, art, and sculpture, and analysed the power dynamics of the body language.³⁶ From this work, Wex concluded that women contract their bodies in public spaces, whereas men extend their bodies into space; as she summarises, ‘the woman makes herself small and narrow, and takes up little space...the man takes up space and generally takes up significantly more space than the woman.’³⁷ Wex notes that this creates a gendered freedom of movement to which men, both literally and figuratively, enjoy far greater access. The ways in which we are invited to kinaesthetically read television, then, particularly female-oriented television, must intersect with and negotiate these elements of normatively gendered kinaesthesia.

The very first episode of *Outlander* is titled ‘Sassenach’ (1:1), which is the Gaelic word for ‘outlander’, or ‘Englishman’. The opening shots of the episode depict part of the Scottish landscape, devoid of human or animal life. The camera drifts slowly to the right as we first hear Claire’s voice over (a crucial structuring element of the series), as she ruminates on the way ‘people disappear all the time’. However, Claire’s examples of such disappearances – ‘young girls run away from home’, ‘housewives take the grocery money and a taxi to the train station’ – are *gendered* examples, suggesting that when she says

³² Iris Marion Young, *On Female Body Experience: ‘Throwing Like a Girl’ and Other Essays* (Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 32.

³³ Grosz, *Volatile Bodies*, p. 195.

³⁴ Susan Bordo, *Unbearable Weight: Feminism, Western Culture, and the Body* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993).

³⁵ Marianne Wex, *Let’s Take Back Our Space: ‘Female’ and ‘Male’ Body Language as a Result of Patriarchal Structures*, trans. by Johanna Albert (Berlin: Frauenliteraturverlag Hermine Fees, 1979).

³⁶ While Wex’s work is more than 35 years old, her insights remain largely valid today. The popular ‘Men Taking Up Too Much Space on the Train’ Tumblr, which chronicles an identical gendered use of space, attests to the continued relevance of Wex’s project. See <<http://mentakingup2muchspaceonthetrain.tumblr.com/>>

³⁷ Wex, *Let’s Take Back Our Space*, p. 7.

‘people’, she actually means ‘women’. Pairing Claire’s voice-over with the ‘empty’ landscape and drifting camera also suggests that women’s speaking positions can never be truly centred; rather, in order to speak as a female protagonist, one must first ‘disappear’. Teresa de Lauretis echoes this equation between femininity and the margins in claiming ‘elsewhere’ as feminism’s critical space: ‘spaces in the margins of hegemonic discourses...carved in the interstices of institutions and in the chinks and cracks of the power-knowledge apparatus.’³⁸ By presenting Claire as speaking from such an ‘elsewhere’ beyond the borders of the frame, a displacement that gains material form in her transportation to eighteenth century Scotland later in the episode, *Outlander* invites us to read female-oriented serial television as speaking from the marginal perspective of the elsewhere, through a body that is repeatedly forced to move to the sidelines.

However, voice-over has generally been understood as a filmic technique that centres subjectivity and experience. Michel Chion describes the voice over as ‘com[ing] from the centre of the image’,³⁹ and Kaja Silverman states that it ‘emanates from the centre of the story’.⁴⁰ Yet both of these theorists understand this centring through gendered terms. Chion describes the voice-over – particularly the voice-over as disembodied *acousmètre*, lacking a visual source – using exclusively masculine pronouns. Silverman also notes that in the rare instances when the cinematic voice-over is female, it is never truly the omniscient narrator of Chion’s *acousmètre*, but is always specifically tied to a female body. More simply, female narration is always the voice of a specific female character and remains confined to a body; male narration can be both the voice of a diegetic character and a disembodied, ‘word of God’ voice.⁴¹ For Silverman, making the

³⁸ Teresa de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender: Essays on Theory, Film and Fiction* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1987), p. 25.

³⁹ Michel Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, trans. by Claudia Gorbman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1999), p. 9.

⁴⁰ Kaja Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror: The Female Voice in Psychoanalysis* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1988), p. 53.

⁴¹ This is also the case in television drama - male voice-overs in programmes such as *Arrested Development* (Fox, 2003-2006; Netflix, 2013), *Jane the Virgin* (The CW, 2014-) and *Pushing Daisies*

feminine perspective indissociable from the diegetic body ‘implies constraint and physical confinement – confinement to the body, to claustal spaces, and to inner narratives’.⁴² Silverman’s work thus again points to elements of normatively gendered experience: speaking as a feminine subject, even when that speech seems to be a centred form of interiority, always operates from a position of embodied confinement.

Such normative understandings of feminine embodiment can be seen in the critical reactions to *Outlander*’s voice over. *io9*’s Katherine Trendacosta describes it as ‘distracting’,⁴³ Leigh Rapper denounces it as ‘clutter in an otherwise simple and elegant scene’,⁴⁴ and most damningly, *Indiewire*’s Liz Shannon Miller suggests that it leaves the series ‘in danger of being smothered to death.’⁴⁵ These criticisms revolve around the redundancy of the voice-over, arguing that it is unnecessary precisely because Claire’s body and facial expressions communicate meaning sufficiently. The aesthetic distinctions the critics use in their judgements – clutter over simplicity, claustrophobia over space – have clear gendered connotations, evoking the claustrophobic, confined experiences associated with normative feminine embodiment. In my previous chapter I argued that the relationship between the voice and the body was particularly crucial for television’s kinaesthetic reading strategies, based in the proxemic relationship between the body and interpersonal conversation so crucial to the medium. Here, the proxemic fit between

(ABC, 2007-2009) and have no diegetic equivalent and hence remain unembodied; the female voice-overs in *Dead Like Me* (Showtime, 2003-2004), *Desperate Housewives* (ABC, 2004-2012), *Grey’s Anatomy* (ABC, 2005–), *Jessica Jones* (Netflix, 2015–), and *Veronica Mars*, in contrast, are specifically linked to diegetic characters. The one possible counter-example to this trend, *Gossip Girl* (The CW, 2007-2012), is simply the exception that proves the rule: the mysterious Gossip Girl is ultimately revealed to have been (male protagonist) Dan Humphrey (Penn Badgley) all along, a doubled denial of the female *acousmêtre*.

⁴² Silverman, *The Acoustic Mirror*, p. 45.

⁴³ Katherine Trendacosta, ‘Dear *Outlander*: Your Actors are Good Enough, Ditch the Voiceover’, *io9*, 18 August 2014. <<http://io9.com/dear-outlander-your-actors-are-good-enough-ditch-the-1623116895>>

⁴⁴ Leigh Rapper, ‘Q: Why is ‘*Outlander*’s Use of Voice Over a Problem? Or Is It?’, *Screenprism*, 25 May 2015. <<http://screenprism.com/insights/article/why-outlanders-use-of-voice-over-is-a-problem.-or-is-it>>

⁴⁵ Liz Shannon Miller, ‘Review: Starz’s ‘*Outlander*’ Needs to Kill the Voice-Over’, *Indiewire*, 4 August 2014. <<http://www.indiewire.com/2014/08/review-starzs-outlander-needs-to-kill-the-voice-over-before-the-voice-over-kills-it-23503/>>

voice and body in television encourages highly gendered readings and critical judgements: Claire's narration, as an embodied rather than disembodied voice over, seems to clutter and constrain the space of the narrative. The preferred readings these critics adopt and circulate thus reiterate normative kinaesthetics of gender.

Yet interestingly, if we turn to look at the programme itself, we can trace something of a resistance to such gendered norms. Claire's stubbornness and irritation are evident in her repeated cursing ('Jesus H. Roosevelt Christ!'), particularly in the early episodes of the series. As Claire struggles to lift Jamie in 'Sassenach' (1:1), she swears 'Come on, you goddamn bloody bastard!', to which a shocked Dougal MacKenzie (Graham McTavish) responds 'I've never heard a woman use such language in my life.' Moira Gatens notes that women who try to find speaking positions in society are devalued and disregarded as angry and emotional.

'Women who step outside their allotted place in the body politic are frequently abused with terms like harpy, virago, vixen, bitch, shrew; terms that make clear that if she attempts to speak from the political body, about the political body, her speech is not recognised as human speech.'⁴⁶

Claire's swearing draws attention to her (il)legibility as a gendered body, for 'stepping outside' her allotted place results in language unrecognisable to the male onlookers. Her swearing is also directly linked to her skills as a twentieth century wartime nurse, as she swears while trying to lift Jamie so she can bandage his wounded shoulder. While care and nursing is a role with clear feminine connotations, Claire's physicality evokes the male world of war and her aggressive speech problematises the gendered connotations associated with care, such as the feminised qualities of gentleness and softness. This serves to highlight the ways in which her embodiment of femininity is decidedly non-normative in the eighteenth century. The opposition between Claire's physicality and the men's silent and static gaze always strikes me when I watch this scene: I acutely feel the

⁴⁶ Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies*, p. 24.

experience of being an unruly female body attempting to be catalogued and categorised by the gaze of men. To some extent, this reflects the fact that despite her physical action, Claire's female body remains highly vulnerable in this masculine space and time, a point I will return to explore in more detail later in this chapter. Yet kinaesthetic gender split constructed in this scene – Claire's action versus the men's gaze - invites us to feel how embodied speech and action determines recognisable forms of gender embodiment for women. This both reiterates particular normative ideas of gender – the female voice remains inescapably tied to the (potentially vulnerable) body – but also invites reflection on how these norms might change or be challenged. 'Sassenach' is the first episode of the series, and so explicitly aims to establish a preferred frame through which to read the characters and the world. By inviting us to read the scene's meaning through the relationship between the patterns of speech and the actions of the body, the scene thus relies on a kinaesthetic reading strategy to negotiate and challenge normative ideas of gender.

Experiencing feminine affect

Invoking the figures of the marginal and the elsewhere places an important caveat on ideas of televisual mobility. While mobility and travel are often framed as pleasurable experiences of freedom and agency, these pleasures are not available to all people. Richard Dyer recognises that screen kineticism relies upon an 'underlying pattern of feeling...that is coded as male (and straight and white, too)';⁴⁷ and Yosefa Loshitzky notes that the 'problematics associated with the application of the travel metaphor to television [are] even more serious from a feminist point of view'.⁴⁸ Yet while Dyer does not imagine what feminine (or queer or non-white feelings) of screen kineticism might

⁴⁷ While neither race nor sexuality is the focus of this chapter, Dyer's inclusion of them here attests to the ways that normative kinaesthesia operates intersectionally. See Richard Dyer, *Only Entertainment* (London: Routledge, 2002), p. 66.

⁴⁸ Yosefa Loshitzky, 'Travelling Culture / Travelling Television', *Screen*, 37 (1996), 323-35 (p. 334).

involve, I believe we can trace a feminine structure of feeling at work in these series's kinaesthetic reading strategies. In de Lauretis's discussion of the feminine 'elsewhere', she stresses that the feminine subject is not just located *in* this other place, but always moves between here and there, between the represented and the unrepresented – as she emphatically asserts, the subject of feminism is the very 'movement between' these spaces.⁴⁹ de Lauretis's work is echoed by Gillian Rose's claim that feminine spatiality is all about 'paradoxical space',⁵⁰ and bell hooks' assertion that the contradictions of occupying both centre and margin are crucial for the work of feminism, particularly for black feminists.⁵¹ The feminine experience of being repeatedly constrained within marginalised space, of having to cross constantly back and forth between margin and centre, is an exhausting one; as Gillian Rose wryly notes, 'no wonder space is so tortuous for so many women.'⁵² For all of these theorists, then, the affective experience of femininity derives precisely from a particular kinaesthetic experience of movement through and within space, one which may involve feelings of trepidation, exhaustion, and struggle more than agency or power.

As a narrative about gender transition, *Transparent* is explicitly concerned with the affective dimensions of such difficult crossings and journeys through gendered space. Throughout the series, Maura's experiences of navigating her gender identity are explicitly communicated to us through particular kinaesthetic moments, such as shopping at the mall ('Moppa' [1:4]; 'Elizah' [3:1]), using public toilets ('Moppa' [1:4]; 'Man on the Land' [2:9]), and dancing ('Symbolic Exemplar' [1:7]; 'Best New Girl' [1:8]; 'Flicky Flicky Thump Thump' [2:2]). By pairing its examination of gender embodiment with kinaesthesia, then, the series very overtly asks us to read its gender politics and to

⁴⁹ de Lauretis, *Technologies of Gender*, p. 26.

⁵⁰ Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1993), p. 150.

⁵¹ bell hooks, *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics* (London: Turnaround Press, 1991), pp. 145-153.

⁵² Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 150.

consider its critique of normative gender binaries kinaesthetically. In 'Moppa' [1:4], Maura's friend, neighbour, and fellow trans woman Davina (Alexandra Billings) instructs her on how to properly embody femininity.

'Listen, can we just close up shop here a little bit? [*She closes Maura's open knees.*] Your male privilege is leaking all over the place. And you don't have to slouch. Keep yourself up and owning it. It's called femininity.'

Davina encourages Maura to perform her gender by changing her kinaesthetic understanding of her own body, through recourse to particular norms of femininity. Closing her legs forces the female body to take up less space, for as Iris Marion Young states, women are 'not as open with their bodies.'⁵³ For Sandra Lee Bartky, normative feminine comportment involves 'not only constriction, but...a certain eroticism restrained by modesty';⁵⁴ Davina's correction of Maura's posture thus also reflects the fact that the feminine stance works to tuck in the stomach and thrust out the breasts. Training the body to properly embody femininity also involves teaching it how to occupy and move through normatively gendered space, leaving more room for male bodies and more surface area for the male gaze. Yet importantly, Davina's use of the phrase 'keep yourself up' reflects the fact that normative femininity is hard work, a constant kinaesthetic policing. After she delivers this line, Davina smiles broadly before telling Maura to stop complaining, reflecting the way that the 'uprightness' of feminine kinaesthetics also mandates an affective corseting, in which negative affects must be denied and contained (much like the female body itself). What Davina labels femininity is thus what Judith Butler terms a 'forcible citation of a norm'⁵⁵ – in this case, a particular affective norm linked to the kinaesthetics of the body.

⁵³ Young, *On Female Body Experience*, p. 32.

⁵⁴ Sandra Lee Bartky, *Femininity and Domination: Studies in the Phenomenology of Oppression* (London: Routledge, 1990), p. 68.

⁵⁵ Butler, *Bodies That Matter*, p. 232

The affective experience of embodying gender is explored further in ‘Man on the Land’ (2:9), in which Maura and her two daughters, Sarah (Amy Landecker) and Ali (Gaby Hoffmann), travel to the ‘Idyllwild Wimmin’s Music Festival’. The festival is a women-only space and is presented through the reclamation of the embodied norms of femininity that I have been discussing in this chapter, such as marginality and constraint. By taking place in the woods, the festival is clearly a space on the margins of society, again suggesting that women’s bodies always end up occupying marginal space. However, this feminine elsewhere is presented as safe and joyous: Ali remarks on how ‘comfortable’ the camp feels’, a comfort that is primarily communicated to us through kinaesthesia. Many of the women in the camp, Ali included, quickly take off their shirts and bras, clearly revelling in their freedom from the corsets and constraints of normative femininity. The three Pfefferman women dance along with the crowd to the Indigo Girls’s performance of ‘Hammer and a Nail’. They repeatedly twirl underneath one another’s arms, a free-flowing movement that emphasises their unapologetic occupation of space and the simple joys of being a body in motion (Figures 3.3-3.4). ‘Man on the Land’ is the penultimate episode of the season, and this moment is a rare respite from the fraught



Figure 3.3 Ali and Maura twirl under one another’s arms as they dance.



Figure 3.4 The Pfefferman women experience the joys of unapologetically taking up space.

familial tension that is the focus of the show, but also from the difficulties of being a feminine body within a normative society. By communicating this particular sense of relief through the pleasurable kinaesthetics of dance, this moment again speaks to us kinaesthetically, inviting us to reflect upon the feelings and experiences associated with being a feminine body.

‘Man on the Land’ also draws attention to the multiple experiences of women, and the ways in which resisting one aspect of normative femininity can still enact forms of exclusion and violence. Rather than unproblematically presenting female-oriented space as progressive, the episode demonstrates that these spaces are governed by embodied norms as damaging and exclusive as the spaces of patriarchal society. The Idyllwild festival is a loosely disguised version of the real-life Michigan Womyn’s Music Festival, which is highly controversial due to its exclusion of transgender women. *Transparent’s* fictionalised version is also a trans-exclusive space; as Vicki (Angelica Houston) explains to Maura, the camp is for ‘women-born-women’. After Maura learns that she is not welcome at the camp as a trans woman, we see a series of scenes that emphasise her rising anxiety and discomfort. She is unable to remain in line for the portable toilets due to the arrival of a male employee (which prompt the line to chant ‘man on the land’); she struggles to find her daughters, growing more and more disoriented; and finally, she dramatically tears down her tent and walks out of the camp, taking up the ‘man on the land’ chant. The editing in the final two sequences is very rapid, drawing attention to Maura’s increasing spatial confusion. By pairing Maura’s struggles to navigate gender with her inability to navigate space, the episode very strongly invites a kinaesthetic reading of gender. It uses Maura’s non-normative kinaesthetic experience to critique both patriarchal norms of gender and the normative structures that exist within feminist movements. This intersectional challenge to the feminist movement again speaks most powerfully through the politics of kinaesthesia – interrogating how bodies are allowed to move through and occupy space, and giving us access to the affective experiences associated with such movement through the world.

The Gendered Kinaesthetics of Seriality

While the Idyllwild Music Festival may be presented as a haven *away from* the everyday anxieties of feminine embodiment, this attests to the fact that the intersections between bodies, spaces, and power structures largely play out across the realm of

ordinary experience. The politics of location have always been a politics of the everyday. Since the second wave fought to make the personal political, feminist theory and activism has been deeply concerned with how the taken-for-granted nature of everyday experience obscures its ideological determinations. Gillian Rose states that feminist theory ‘requires attention to the ordinary, to the unexceptional, because women are excluded from arenas of power and prestige.’⁵⁶ Rose goes on to argue that feminism’s ‘awareness of the politics of the everyday’ necessitates a similar ‘awareness of the intersection of space and power’, suggesting that interrogating the everyday demands a similar interrogation of its underlying kinaesthetic politics.⁵⁷ In the previous chapter I argued that television’s kinaesthetic reading strategies interact with ideas of the familiar and the everyday, a critical stance that is even more necessary when exploring questions of gender and sexuality.

Laura Bates’s *Everyday Sexism* project epitomises the feminist concern with the everyday, particularly the everyday experience of women in public spaces.⁵⁸ The project is based on the premise that despite the pervasive belief that gender equality has well and truly been achieved in the West, sexism is still a systemic part of contemporary Western culture, and is encountered in a myriad of ordinary ways on a daily basis. *Everyday Sexism* began as a Twitter campaign against street harassment, in which women shared their experiences of being catcalled and harassed while going about their daily routines. In this sense, I believe we can read the experience of everyday sexism as a fundamentally *kinaesthetic* experience: ordinary experiences of sexism are most strongly felt when the body tries to move through and occupy particular spaces, making it precisely a problem of kinaesthesia. Yet everyday sexism is also a problem of *narrative* – the project is about encouraging people to tell and to share their stories. Storytelling has always been a way through which we organise our experiences of everyday life. It has also been crucial in

⁵⁶ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 22.

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 142.

⁵⁸ Laura Bates, *Everyday Sexism* (London: Simon and Schuster, 2014).

feminist theory and practice. Feminist activists and writers use experience-based storytelling as a way to challenge the masculine hegemony of academic language and scholarship,⁵⁹ to open up spaces for excluded voices to rewrite dominant narratives,⁶⁰ and to produce new forms of self- and collective consciousness.⁶¹ Importantly, the narratives of the *Everyday Sexism* project are in effect serial narratives: a collection of repetitive units that may reach some degree of closure on an individual level, but at the collective, systemic level, In this sense, I believe that as well as being questions of kinaesthetic politics, stories of everyday gendered experience are always serial stories, produced, distributed, and experienced as fragmented parts of a regularly encountered narrative.

There is, perhaps, a broader political potential between the work of identity politics and the narrational patterns of seriality. Iris Marion Young presents seriality as a means of negotiating the key double bind of feminist activism – the fact that establishing a group identity for women is both necessary and impossible, the base requirement for political action yet an unavoidable means of obscuring and erasing difference.⁶² She draws from Sartre’s distinction between a group and a series, in which the former is a collection of people who recognise themselves and one another through shared interests and actions, and the latter a collective formed through a shared orientation to certain objects and actions.⁶³ In understanding gender through seriality, Young claims, ‘it is not necessary to identify a set of common attributes that every member has, because their membership is defined not by something they are but rather by the fact that...they are

⁵⁹ See Lorraine Code, *What Can She Know?: Feminist Theory and the Construction of Knowledge* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991); and Sandra Harding, *Whose Science? Whose Knowledge? Thinking from Women’s Lives* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1991).

⁶⁰ bell hooks, *Talking Back: Thinking Feminist and Thinking Black* (Boston: South End Press, 1989).

⁶¹ See *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*, ed. by Chandra Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991).

⁶² Iris Marion Young, ‘Gender as Seriality: Thinking About Women as a Social Collective’, *Signs*, 19 (1994), 713–38.

⁶³ An activist collective would be an example of a group; a collection of people waiting for a bus would be an example of a series.

oriented around the same objects of practio-inert structures'.⁶⁴ Young's examples of such objects and structures include the sexed forms of bodies (possessing breasts produces a legibly feminine comportment), means of transportation (waiting for a bus produces the serial collective of the commuter), and broadcasting media (listening to the radio produces an audience). In this sense, Young's work can be usefully explored through the point where bodies, transportation, media, and seriality all collide – the kinaesthetics of serial television.

In the previous chapter I suggested that the structures of serial narration had kinaesthetic dimensions, such as the embodied logics of the cliffhanger. In what follows, I want to consider how seriality's structures of desire might reiterate or resist normative ideas of embodiment and gender. In her work on the affective experience of reading, Robyn Warhol argues that the unique structures of feeling associated with serial consumption leave imprints on both our affective experience and our bodies:

'This alternation of engagement with tedium and of suspense with speculation adds up to a profound ambivalence that leaves its marking (sic) on the reader's affective life, creating a pattern over the long term that I think of as performative: by putting the reader's body through a repeated series of feelings, reading serially constitutes a definable aspect of gendered, bourgeois subjectivity.'⁶⁵

Here, Warhol suggests that the affective experiences associated with serial narratives become a way of establishing normative markers of identity. In a similar way, Yuriko Saito argues that serial fiction is 'one of those cultural technologies that writes Western-ness, middle class-ness and gender on and through our bodies'.⁶⁶ We might like to consider, for example, how emotional responses to screen texts make bodies recognisably feminine (Molly Haskell refers to the 'wet, wasted afternoons' of the weeping female

⁶⁴ Young, 'Gender as Seriality', p. 728.

⁶⁵ Warhol, *Having a Good Cry*, p. 81.

⁶⁶ Yuriko Saito, *Everyday Aesthetics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), p. 121.

audience⁶⁷), or how physically aggressive reactions to football matches (a sports season is, I believe, equivalent to a serial narrative) produce masculine bodies. Following Warhol and Saito, I argue that if serial narration promotes certain kinaesthetic readings, then those readings must necessarily encourage particular understandings and definitions of gendered embodiment and gendered desire. In other words, the desires and affects embedded within serial narration come to bear upon the ways in which we understand how bodies can or might move through everyday life. In the following sections I explore these ideas in relation to two key intersections between seriality and embodiment: firstly, the increasingly common connection between serial narratives and rape narratives, and secondly, seriality's potential for offering kinaesthetic transformations of gender.

Rape as serial kinaesthesia

The centrality of experiences of street harassment to the *Everyday Sexism* project suggest that serial stories of gendered identity are structured around the threat of male-induced sexual violence. Such ordinary orientations are crucial to the perpetuation and maintenance of rape culture, defined by Buchwald, Fletcher and Roth as a culture in which 'sexual violence is a fact of life, inevitable as death or taxes.'⁶⁸ Susan Griffin begins her influential article on rape with a concise summary of the experience of living in a rape culture, stating that she has always 'thought of rape as part of my natural environment';⁶⁹ in a similar way, Catherine MacKinnon sees it as 'indigenous, not exceptional, to women's social condition', again identifying a naturalised (and ordinary) link between femininity and susceptibility to sexual violence.⁷⁰ The naturalisation of rape culture operates through the everyday experiences of kinaesthesia. One woman's account in the published

⁶⁷ Molly Haskell, *From Reverence to Rape: The Treatment of Women in the Movies* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1974), p. 154.

⁶⁸ Emilie Buchwald, Pamela Fletcher, and Martha Roth, *Transforming a Rape Culture* (Minneapolis: Milkweed Editions, 1993), p. vii.

⁶⁹ Susan Griffin, 'Rape: The All-American Crime', *Ramparts*, September (1971), 26-35 (p. 26).

⁷⁰ Catherine A. MacKinnon, *Toward a Feminist Theory of the State* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 172.

collection of the *Everyday Sexism* project emphasises the way this threat changes her kinaesthetics, stating that ‘I walk at a certain distance from groups of men...[or] I take a different route. This is all just normal to me now...It’s everyday.’⁷¹ This respondent adjusts her movement due to the anticipated threat of harassment, to the extent that such kinaesthetic adjustments are now ordinary parts of her experience as a woman. Again, this clearly demonstrates the way that feminine kinaesthetic experience is predicated upon and defined by the everyday threat of violence.

As an experience, rape is not gender-specific, in that both men and women can inflict sexual violence upon others, and can be subjected to such violence themselves. However, in the binary sexual logics of Western culture, rape disproportionately affects women. The typical smallness of feminine bodily experience – constricted space, restricted movement, and marginalised position – do not arise from any innate kinaesthetic attribute, but from the dangers involved in occupying and moving through space. In the conclusions she draws from her photographs of men and women in public spaces, Marianne Wex argues that in keeping their bodies small and constrained, women are placed in an affective structure of ‘introversion...self-concealment, timidity and fearfulness’.⁷² Indeed, women are always reminded that certain spaces and times are unsafe, and that to move their bodies within these spatiotemporal locations is to place the body at high risk of assault. Consequently, susceptibility to sexual violence operates as a means of normatively sexing bodies. Sharon Marcus argues that rape is a ‘mode of feminising women’;⁷³ similarly, Ann Cahill stresses that rape ‘not only happens to women; it is a fundamental moment in the reproduction of women qua women’.⁷⁴ This particular

⁷¹ Bates, *Everyday Sexism*, p. 164

⁷² Wex, *Let’s Take Back our Space*, p. 7.

⁷³ Sharon Marcus, ‘Fighting Bodies, Fighting Words: A Theory and Politics of Rape Prevention’, in *Feminists Theorise the Political*, ed. by Judith Butler and Joan W. Scott (New York: Routledge, 1992), pp. 385-405, (p. 391).

⁷⁴ Ann J. Cahill, *Rethinking Rape* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), p. 126.

set of kinaesthetics – in which a body is fearfully oriented towards a threatening world – is thus what produces a normatively feminised body.

Yet just as women find it impossible to circumvent the threat of rape in their everyday routines, our consumption of media texts is also marked by the constant irruption of rape; as Sarah Projansky notes, ‘it is impossible to avoid encountering representations of rape *often* in our daily lives.’⁷⁵ She sees rape as a ‘key aspect of storytelling throughout Western history’, a ‘particularly versatile narrative element’ that has the power to address a variety of thematic concerns.⁷⁶ This versatility can be seen in rape’s prevalence within television, where it is used as a key narrative trope across a range of genres, from drama to comedy to talk show programming.⁷⁷ The narrative and thematic function of rape on television changes according to particular sociohistorical contexts, reflecting both rape culture’s adjustments to the everyday realities of its particular place and time, and Newcomb and Hirsch’s belief in television’s role as a ‘cultural forum’ (or a space for the working through of ideological and cultural narratives).⁷⁸ Lisa Cuklanz, in her study of rape in television in the 1970s and 1980s, argues that televisual depictions of rape are always used as a means to explore and construct particular ideas of masculinity.⁷⁹ Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray suggest that rape functions on television as a ‘media

⁷⁵ Sarah Projansky, *Watching Rape: Film and Television in Postfeminist Culture* (New York: New York University Press, 2001), p. 231.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁷⁷ Drama series often use rape as a backstory for their female characters: in *Law and Order: Special Victims Unit* (NBC 1999–), Olivia Benson (Mariska Hargitay) believes she was conceived through rape; and *Veronica Mars*’s first season revolves around Veronica (Kristen Bell) investigating her own rape. Sitcoms use rape either as way to raise dramatic stakes, such as Kimberley Drummond’s (Dana Plato) near escape in *Diffrent Strokes* (NBC, 1978–1985; ABC, 1985–1986); or as a subject for jokes, such as *Two Broke Girls*’s (CBS, 2011–2017) repeated jokes about date-rape. Talk shows such as *The Oprah Winfrey Show* (ABC, 1986–2001) and *The View* (ABC, 1997–) also frequently have episodes that revolve around rape and rape confessions.

⁷⁸ Horace M. Newcomb and Paul M. Hirsch, ‘Television as a Cultural Forum: Implications for Research’, *Quarterly Review of Film Studies*, 8 (1983), 45–55 (p. 49).

⁷⁹ Lisa M. Cuklanz, *Rape on Prime Time: Television, Masculinity, and Sexual Violence* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2000).

commodity', circulating as a form of shock value in a culture desensitised to violence.⁸⁰

Sujata Moorti asserts that while the gendered discourses of rape may shift on television, as 'the subject positions occupied by men and women in rape narratives are unstable', its racial implications remain highly normative, presenting the victim of rape (and hence the feminine subject) as always white.⁸¹ Despite their different focal points, all three arguments recognise that the narrative power of televisual rape works to naturalise sexual violence according to distinctions of gender, race, and commoditised value.

However, while each of these theorists analyse televisual rape prior to 2001, the new millennium has brought a surge of depictions of rape on television, something clearly linked to the rise of 'quality television'. 1999 saw the debut of *Law & Order: Special Victims Unit* (NBC, 1999–), which revolved specifically around crimes of sexual violence. Every episode of *Special Victims Unit* begins with a (male) voice over that states that 'sexually based offences are considered especially heinous', and the detectives assigned to such cases are part of 'an elite squad.' Here, rape becomes a form of distinguishing value that extends to the brand identity of the narrative itself: engaging with narratives of rape, whether as a fictional detective or a television series, allows one to occupy an 'elite' position in the cultural sphere. Kim Akass and Janet McCabe, in their discussion of how HBO courts controversy as a means of establishing its 'quality' brand', suggest that 'pushing the limits of respectability, of daring to say/do what cannot be said/done elsewhere on the networks, is entwined with being esoteric, groundbreaking and risk-taking.'⁸² Consequently, it is perhaps no surprise that many series lauded as part of quality television, such as *The Sopranos*, *Mad Men*, and *Game of Thrones*, also use the raped woman's body as a way to locate themselves at the forefront of television drama. Markers

⁸⁰ Linda Alcoff and Laura Gray, 'Survivor Discourse: Transgression or Recuperation?', *Signs*, 18 (1993), 260–91, (p. 278).

⁸¹ Sujata Moorti, *Colour of Rape: Gender and Race in Television's Public Sphere* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2002), p. 12–3.

⁸² Janet McCabe and Kim Akass, 'Sex, Swearing and Respectability: Courting Controversy, HBO's Original Programming and Producing Quality TV', in *Quality TV: Contemporary American Television and Beyond*, ed. by Janet McCabe and Kim Akass (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), pp. 62–76 (p.67).

of quality in serial television thus seem to play out across the bodies and embodied experiences of women. Therefore, as Joyrich states, television's promise to go 'where "no man" has gone before may still seem awfully familiar to women at home'.⁸³

This trend has arguably accelerated in the last decade. Looking at series in the last three years alone shows a remarkable frequency of rape, from heritage dramas (*Downton Abbey* [ITV, 2010-2015]) to political thrillers (*House of Cards* [Netflix, 2013-]; *Scandal* [ABC, 2012-]) to fantasy series (*Game of Thrones*) and even comedy programmes (*Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* [Netflix, 2015-]). Sonia Saraiya, writing for *Salon*, goes as far to suggest that 'my job title has changed from television critic to "senior rape correspondent" because I cover televisual sexual assault with alarming frequency.'⁸⁴ To some extent, this reflects a broader cultural concern with rape culture, following a series of high-profile rape cases in 2012.⁸⁵ Yet this alone does not explain the exhausting prevalence of rape within contemporary television drama. Lichter, Lichter, and Rothman go so far as to claim that rape is 'a crime ideally suited to television', a somewhat dubious claim based in the attractions of rape as an 'action packed' form of spectacle.⁸⁶ However, I believe that there is something about the rape narrative that might make it suited to television – namely, its propensity for kinaesthetic reading strategies. By economically communicating ideas about gender, desire, agency and power through the ways in which the body moves through and takes up space, the rape narrative encourages kinaesthetic readings. Like my

⁸³ Joyrich, *Re-Viewing Reception*, p. 18.

⁸⁴ Sonia Saraiya, 'The Truth About TV's Rape Obsession: How We Struggle with the Broken Myths of Masculinity, On Screen and Off', *Salon*, 25 June 2015.
<http://www.salon.com/2015/06/25/the_truth_about_tvs_rape_obsession_how_we_struggle_with_the_broken_myths_of_masculinity_on_screen_and_off/>

⁸⁵ See the 2012 Delhi gang rape case, in which a young woman was repeatedly raped while travelling on a bus; the 2012 Steubenville High School rape case, where an intoxicated teenager was assaulted by her peers; the rape and murder of Jill Meagher in Melbourne in 2012; and the prevalence of high-profile rape cases on college campuses in the US, as depicted in the 2015 film *The Hunting Ground* (Kirby Dick, 2015).

⁸⁶ S. Robert Lichter, Linda S. Lichter, and Stanley Rothman, *Prime Time: How TV Portrays American Culture* (Washington DC: Regnery, 1994), p. 280.

understanding of television, rape is an experience that 'begins with the body';⁸⁷ and like kinaesthesia, it is something that operates both as embodied experience and disciplinary practice. It is thus unsurprising that the rape narrative functions as a key trope for television dramas that encourage kinaesthetic reading strategies.

The first two episodes of *Outlander* use rape as a means of (re)producing gendered bodies. On arriving in eighteenth century Scotland in 'Sassenach' (1:1), the very first thing that Claire experiences is sexual violence. Disoriented and stumbling through the woods, she encounters Captain Jack Randall (Tobias Menzies), who pushes her against a cliff face while fumbling with her skirts. Claire's new spatiotemporal location, in which being a woman has different meanings and limitations to those of the twentieth century, is communicated precisely through a change in her kinaesthetics: her heightened susceptibility to rape. Before Randall can penetrate Claire, he is attacked by one of Dougal Mackenzie's men, Murtagh Fraser (Duncan Lacroix), who knocks him unconscious and rescues Claire. Murtagh takes Claire with him back to the hut where Dougal's men are camped. While some of the men make crude jokes about Claire's experience, Dougal reprimands them with a firm 'I don't hold with rape.' These scenes work to establish the moral landscape of Scotland, clearly identifying which male characters are good, and which are bad. Consequently, the characters of eighteenth century Scotland are all developed through their orientation to rape – Claire as rapeable woman, Randall as villainous rapist, and Dougal's band of men as the heroes. The gendered kinaesthetics of rape thus work as narrative shorthand, asking us to read the meaning of the new location and its characters through the kinaesthetics associated with sexual violence.

In an identical fashion, 'Castle Leoch (1:2) also uses rape to establish the gendered dynamics between the characters. Jamie tells Claire the story behind his heavily scarred back, explaining that he agreed to be whipped by Randall in order to protect his sister

⁸⁷ Cahill, *Rethinking Rape*, p. 5.

Jenny (Laura Donnelly) from being raped. During the initial confrontation between Randall and Jamie, two English soldiers restrain Jamie by holding onto his arms and shoulders, and Randall pins Jenny's hands above her head, forcing her to bare her throat to his gun. Jamie's body remains kinaesthetically powerful in this sequence, as the paired English soldiers on either side emphasise the breadth of his chest and the power of his barely contained movement (Figure 3.5). In

contrast, Jenny is marked by highly vulnerable kinaesthetics: holding her arms above her head narrows the width of her body and reduces her capacity to move through space, reflected in the way she is steered tightly along by Randall (Figure 3.6). In the following scene in which Jamie is whipped, his wrists are tied with ropes to the wall, holding his arms in a V-shape (Figure 3.7). While Jamie's body is as vulnerable to violence as Jenny's body was in the preceding scene, this vulnerability differs along a kinaesthetic dimension. Jamie's body remains spatially expansive and thus somewhat impenetrable,

meaning that the violence that Randall

inflicts upon it lands on the surface of his skin. In contrast, Jenny's constricted arms create a hollow above her head, linking the spatiality of her body with a penetrable space. In his account to Claire, Jamie describes Randall as attacking Jenny because he 'wanted to send a message', reflecting Tanya Horeck's assertion that 'the bodies of raped women function



Figure 3.5 Jamie's powerful, masculine kinaesthetics.



Figure 3.6 Susceptibility to male violence produces vulnerable, feminine kinaesthetics.



Figure 3.7 Jaime retains his masculine kinaesthetics while being whipped.

as symbols of violent communication between men.’⁸⁸ For while these early episodes invite us to read two versions of masculinity, split down a moral dimension of value, femininity seems to be only defined in terms of its susceptibility to sexual violence. Not all men may be rapists, *Outlander* suggests, but all women are rapeable.

Rather than simply marking out a series as extra-ordinary, then, rape in serial television drama entrenches sexual violence as the everyday horizon of feminine experience, producing familiar kinaesthetic patterns of movement and spatiality. It is these anticipatory dynamics of rape – the way it functions as a persistent threat and fear in the lives of feminine subjects – that makes it so well suited to the kinaesthetics of serial television. As discussed in the previous chapter, serial television revolves around the structure of anticipation, constructing an iterated, interrupted narrative marked by the refusal of closure. These anticipatory dynamics, or what we might call seriality’s affective structure, similarly organise experiences and narratives of rape. Rape is an expectant horizon in feminine experience, producing a feminine body marked by the looming threat of violence. Susan Berridge states that ‘[w]hat links different forms of sexually abusive behaviour...is fear, specifically the *victim’s perceptions of what may happen next*’ (emphasis added).⁸⁹ Berridge’s description of the kernel of sexual violence – the anticipation of what will happen next – is the same impulse at the heart of serial storytelling. In this sense, there may be a certain congruency between the affective structures of rape narratives and serial narration, suggesting that seriality (and the desires and affects involved in its consumption) might be key in producing or negotiating dominant ideas of gendered kinaesthesia.

⁸⁸ Tanya Horeck, *Public Rape: Representing Violation in Fiction and Film* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 42.

⁸⁹ Susan Berridge, ‘Empowered Vulnerability?: A Feminist Response to the Ubiquity of Sexual Violence in the Pilots of Female-Fronted Teen Drama Series’, in *Feminist Erasures: Challenging Backlash Culture*, ed. by Kumarini Silva and Kaitlynn Mendes (Palgrave Macmillan, 2015), pp. 91-105 (p. 94-5).

In the introduction to this chapter I outlined the ways in which seriality's structures of feelings are highly gendered: the entrenched link between seriality and the soap opera means that seriality is often presumed to be a feminine mode of narration. Tania Modleski argues that the soap opera, in 'mak[ing] anticipation of an end an end in itself...invest[s] exquisite pleasure in the central condition of a woman's life: waiting.'⁹⁰ Modleski's work has been criticised for assuming that the feminine subject of seriality is a historically stable category, and refusing to admit the ways in which female desire varies over time.⁹¹ Following this critique, theorists of seriality have tended to conclude that it is the content, themes, and production contexts of soap operas that mark them as feminine forms, rather than the narrative structures of seriality itself.⁹² However, while these criticisms are valid, I would argue that Modleski is less concerned with narratology than with the *affective experiences* of consuming serial fiction. Consequently, her work still has much to offer us in thinking about how serial narration interacts with norms of gendered embodiment. Her analysis of the soap opera, in which 'truth for women is seen to lie not at the "end of expectation," but *in* expectation',⁹³ is equally applicable for the affective experience of the female body: the 'truth' (or normativity) of the feminine body is found in its expectant orientations towards threatening masculine form. The ways in which we are invited to read and experience serial fiction thus align with the ways we are invited to read and experience normative feminine embodiment.

It is unsurprising, therefore, that rape narratives tend to draw heavily from the cliffhanger. In the previous chapter I argued that the cliffhanger relies upon particular (and often violent) forms of embodied affect, exploiting the 'corporeal anticipation' of future movement.⁹⁴ The anticipation of what will happen next – which structures rape,

⁹⁰ Modleski, *Loving With a Vengeance*, p. 80.

⁹¹ See Lynn Spigel, 'Detours in the Search for Tomorrow: Tania Modleski's *Loving with a Vengeance*', *Camera Obscura*, 13-14 (1985), 215-34.

⁹² Hayward, *Consuming Pleasures*, pp. 141-2.

⁹³ Modleski, *Loving With a Vengeance*, p. 80.

⁹⁴ Lisa Purse, *Contemporary Action Cinema* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2011), p. 47.

seriality, and kinaesthesia alike – is key to the cliffhanger. Again, this makes rape a particularly powerful storytelling device in the kinaesthetics of serial television, for it always works, as Mieke Bal claims in her discussion of the cultural uses of rape narratives, ‘to lead the narrative to its next phase’.⁹⁵ *Outlander*’s first season was broadcast in two halves, the first eight episodes airing in August and September in 2014, and the remaining eight in April and May in 2015.⁹⁶ The midseason finale, ‘Both Sides Now’ (1:8), uses a cliffhanger ending that revolves around the potential rape of Claire. Claire was captured by the English earlier in the episode, and is subject to questioning by Randall. While she at first appears to have the upper hand in the interrogation, her misidentification of the Duke of Sandringham’s wife sparks Randall’s suspicion.⁹⁷ He binds her hands with rope and forces her torso down onto the table, hitching up her skirts and kicking her legs apart. The sequence mostly uses tight close ups, reflecting Lorna Jowett’s suggestion that depictions of television rape are based around implied action, using shots that ‘suggest rather than reveal’.⁹⁸ Crucially, these shots are always isolated parts of Claire’s body: her frightened face, her bare buttocks, and her spread ankles. Each successive close up of Claire’s body is slightly shorter than the preceding one, creating a strong sense of forward momentum. Liz Kelly argues that sexual violence exists on a ‘continuum’, of which rape is the most extreme end:⁹⁹ here, the forward momentum of the shots gestures towards the

⁹⁵ Mieke Bal, ‘The Rape of Narrative and the Narrative of Rape’, in *Literature and the Body: Essays on Populations and Persons*, ed. by Elaine Scarry (Baltimore: The John Hopkins University Press, 1988), pp. 1-32 (p. 1).

⁹⁶ In the UK, *Outlander* debuted on Amazon Prime on March 26th 2015, a week before the series returned for the second half of the season. The first eight episodes were made available all at once, with the remaining eight going live shortly after airing in the US. Consequently, the ending of episode eight continued to operate as a cliffhanger, if for a reduced period of time.

⁹⁷ Sandringham is unmarried, and Randall mentions the Duchess of Sandringham to Claire to try and call her bluff. Claire stumbles into the trap, suggesting that she has been in written correspondence with the non-existent Duchess.

⁹⁸ Lorna Jowett, ‘Rape, Power, Realism and the Fantastic on Television’, in *Feminism, Literature and Rape Narratives: Violence and Violation*, ed. by Sorcha Gunne and Zoë Brigley Thompson (London: Routledge, 2010), pp. 217-231 (p. 225).

⁹⁹ Liz Kelly, *Surviving Sexual Violence* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988).

‘final’ act of penetrative rape, organising Claire’s fragmented body around the threat of rape.

In contrast, the shots that draw attention to Randall’s actions – forcing Claire onto the table, lifting her skirts – are longer in terms of both framing and duration. Randall’s masculine body commands the space and time for goal-oriented action, as each step in the ‘continuum’ of violence is shown clearly. Claire’s feminine body, conversely, is fragmented into an implied form, revolving around expectation rather than realisation. This formal organisation, in which the feminine experience of rape is fragmented into a progression of gestures onwards, again explicitly invites us to read the scene through the gendered kinaesthetics of violence and vulnerability. The episode ends with Jamie appearing in the window with a rifle, growling ‘I’ll thank ye to take your hands off my wife’, before closing on a shot of Claire’s frightened face. Like the *Game of Thrones* cliffhangers discussed in the previous chapter, *Outlander* uses thwarted action to power its cliffhanger ending, as the potential movement patterns of rape and/or rescue reverberate into the serial gap. Sean O’Sullivan suggests that serial narrative is organised more around ‘the broken rather than the whole’,¹⁰⁰ and thus the broken (or more concisely, the *breakable*) feminine body provides a powerful kinaesthetic motor for serial storytelling, and a powerful site for a preferred kinaesthetic reading strategy.¹⁰¹

However, like the feminised patterns of seriality itself, the experience of the threat of rape never concludes. We can see this open-ended kinaesthetic narrative at work in the promotional material that circulated during the mid-season hiatus (Figure 3.8). In March

¹⁰⁰ Sean O’Sullivan, ‘Serials and Satisfaction’, *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 63 (2013), para 2. <<https://www.erudit.org/en/journals/ravon/2013-n63-ravon01450/1025614ar/>>

¹⁰¹ We can see this trend – in which rape acts as a narrative engine to lead the narrative onwards – in many other serial dramas. *Veronica Mars*, *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt*, and *Jessica Jones* all use a history of rape as the departure point for their lead characters; and *Downton Abbey* and *Game of Thrones* use rape as a means of introducing drama to storylines that are otherwise at risk of stagnating (Anna Bates’s [Joanne Froggatt] domestic bliss and Cersei Lannister’s [Lena Headey] political machinations respectively).

2015, Starz released a new poster to promote the second half of season one. This new poster directly paralleled the original promotional material, which depicts Claire standing between Jamie and Frank, both of whom extend a hand to her. Claire reaches towards Frank but angles her body towards Jamie, reflecting the way she is caught between the two men. Claire's stance is near identical in the second poster, but this time, she wields a knife, and the hand gesturing from beyond the frame belongs to Randall (as evidenced by his redcoat sleeve). As official promotional paratexts, these posters very



Figure 3.8 Kinaesthetic narratives of gender in *Outlander*'s promotional posters.

clearly establish preferred reading strategies for the series, ones that reiterate particular norms of gender embodiment. The posters also very obviously invite kinaesthetic readings. Each poster includes an arm reaching towards the other figures: Frank in the first poster, Randall in the second, and Claire herself in a third, which reverses the second poster to show Randall's violent stance. This framing clearly invites us to place ourselves within the shoes of the off-frame figure, drawing from our own embodied knowledge to interpret how and why the other characters are responding and reacting.

The tagline for the second set of posters is the somewhat unimaginative 'The Story Continues.' While this illustrates little about the narrative content of the season, it perfectly illustrates its normatively gendered kinaesthetics, suggesting that persistent threat of rape (and male violence) is the continuing story for Claire. The posters thus

make the resolution of the cliffhanger somewhat moot: regardless of how the action of the cliffhanger is resolved, Claire's experience and story is continually structured by the never-ending threat of rape. In this sense, the preferred reading strategies offered to us in these paratexts are both highly kinaesthetic *and* highly gendered, again emphasising the intersections between kinaesthesia and gender politics in the consumption of serial television. To return to Young's notion of the seriality of gender identity, she suggests that women empathise with stories of rape because they 'recognise that in my serialised existence I am rapeable.'¹⁰² *Outlander*'s connection between serial narration and stories of rape thus again suggest that the normative feminine body and normative feminine affect are defined by expectations of sexual violence.

Yet understanding rape as the horizon of feminine experience runs the risk of creating a self-fulfilling prophecy, in which the effects of rape culture – the equation between femininity and victimhood – are mistaken as its cause. Sandra Lee Bartky warns against this conflation, arguing that focusing on an 'aesthetic of femininity...that mandates fragility and a lack of muscular strength produces female bodies that can offer little resistance to physical abuse.'¹⁰³ Bartky identifies a circular relationship between theory and experience, in which recognising feminine vulnerability ratifies vulnerability as a condition of the feminine. The question remains, then, as to whether it is possible to tell a story of ordinary gendered kinaesthesia that remains sensitive to the threat of violence without reiterating it and thus reproducing normatively gendered bodies. Sarah Projansky argues that we should not search for 'better' representations of rape, but for a better critical language to discuss the representations we inevitably encounter in our regular consumption of television. In the previous chapter I argued that attending to the kinaesthetics of television offers an alternative means of evaluating serial television drama that avoids some of the evaluative tropes of masculinised aesthetic criticism. In the

¹⁰² Young, 'Gender as Seriality', p. 731.

¹⁰³ Bartky, *Femininity and Domination*, p. 73.

final part of this exploration of rape on television, I want to consider whether it is possible for a kinaesthetic reading of the rape narrative to offer some degree of resistance to dominant ideas of gendered embodiment and gendered evaluation.

The final episode of *Outlander*'s first season, 'To Ransom a Man's Soul' (1:16), returns to tell a story of rape involving Randall. This was the fourth time in the series that this narrative has been repeated, following Claire's attacks in both 'Sassenach' (1:1) and 'Both Sides Now' (1:8), and Jenny's near-rape in 'Lallybroch' (1:12). In this episode, however, not only does the rape transpire in graphic detail, but it is inflicted upon a male body: that of Jamie himself. For Lisa Cuklanz, the dominance of rape on television is linked to the medium's redundancy (another feature key to seriality), namely through the way television tends to repeat successful formats and genres.¹⁰⁴ However, Cuklanz fails to consider the fact that such repetition is never perfect, but inevitably involves an element of variation that opens up space for new and resistant meanings. In *Outlander*, the gendered inversion of this familiar narrative does not simply flip the binary on its head, allowing Claire to take up a traditionally masculine position; nor does it work to reiterate rape as a social contract between men, erasing the experience of women. Rather, writing the feminine experience of rape upon masculine bodies upsets the standard circulations of normative kinaesthesia, making both familiar narrative patterns and familiar gendered bodies strange.

Robyn Warhol argues that the experience of consuming serial fiction can be best described by the 'ebb and flow of the wave pattern', which consists of building climaxes and undertows of feeling.¹⁰⁵ As the season finale, we would expect that 'To Ransom a Man's Soul' should end with an ebb of feeling (potentially a cliffhanger), leaving the affective undertow to stretch out through the hiatus period. Yet the episode reverses this dominant pattern by placing the seeming climax of the episode – Jamie's rescue from the

¹⁰⁴ Cuklanz, *Rape on Prime Time*, p. 13.

¹⁰⁵ Warhol, *Having a Good Cry*, p. 105.

dungeon – in the opening scene. The remainder of the episode revolves around the emotional fallout, continually returning to scenes of intense violence in flashback. This is reflected in the formal features of the episode, for the flashbacks lack the fast editing commonly used in many television rape scenes, refusing to use rape as a means of forcing the narrative onwards. Showrunner Ron Moore refers to this unusual narrative structure in his commentary for the episode, stating that the writers originally planned to place Jamie's rehabilitation at the beginning of season two. It is perhaps unsurprising that the critical reaction to the episode was somewhat ambivalent: Sonia Saraiya described the episode as 'flat' and 'sloppy' for a season finale, claiming that the narrative never 'recovers' from its shocking brutality.¹⁰⁶ Like the critical reaction to both Ayra's training and *Lost*'s finale that I discussed in the previous chapter, I would argue that this evaluation is a misunderstanding of how the episode asks us to read it. I believe that by deliberately unhinging rape from its normalised position as an engine in serial storytelling, and by dwelling on the aftermath of rape rather than using it as a cliffhanger, the episode forces us to reflect on how seriality's rape narratives are usually told and how it feels to consume them.

Kinaesthetically reading and reflecting on television's rape narratives might open up a space for some degree of resistance. Male-male rape remains something of a taboo in Western society, related to its function as a disciplinary practice of gendering bodies. Karen Weiss notes that male victims are rarely part of discussions surrounding rape culture, because hegemonic masculinity demands that male bodies are tough and impenetrable, and that male sexuality is always assertive and dominant.¹⁰⁷ Consequently, men are highly unlikely to report instances of rape due to the stigma and shame

¹⁰⁶ Sonia Saraiya, 'The "Outlander" Torture Chamber: A Shockingly Brutal Rape Transforms a Hero into a Victim, but at What Cost?', *Salon*, 31 May 2015.
http://www.salon.com/2015/05/31/the_outlander_torture_chamber_a_shockingly_brutal_rape_transforms_a_hero_into_a_victim_but_at_what_cost/

¹⁰⁷ Karen G. Weiss, 'Male Sexual Victimization: Examining Men's Experiences of Rape and Sexual Assault', in *Men and Masculinities*, 12 (3), 275-98 (p. 277).

associated with its non-normative gender dynamics; as one victim of male-male rape stated, ‘only women are raped.’¹⁰⁸ There are contexts in which male-male rape does have societal recognition, namely its prevalence within prisons; indeed, Jamie’s rape occurs when he is imprisoned in the dungeons of Fort Wentworth. Yet prison rape continues to operate as a means of gendering bodies according to ideas of power and vulnerability, and its restriction to prison environments – a place already coded as being beyond the boundaries of acceptable society – again suggests that male-male rape remains taboo and unspeakable in everyday contexts. The key moment in which Jamie first verbalises his experience occurs in a conversation with Murtagh. This scene takes place entirely in unsubtitled Gaelic, meaning that the audience is not privy to the meaning of Jamie’s words. This seems to affirm Elaine Scarry’s much-cited belief that pain is inexpressible, for it places Jamie’s trauma beyond the comprehension of (the vast majority of) the audience.¹⁰⁹ Yet while the specificities of the dialogue may be lost, meaning can still be gleaned through the expressive body language and gestures of the two men, and their proxemic relationship to one another. Murtagh’s violent gesturing gives us access to his desperate concern, and Jamie’s stillness allows us to grasp his sense of shame and surrender to his trauma. The scene thus explicitly asks us to read it kinaesthetically, suggesting that while the pain of Jamie’s rape may be inexpressible through the language of dominant culture, it can be kinaesthetically shared.

Of course, inviting the audience to kinaesthetically share Jamie’s experience is not an easy or pleasurable activity. ‘To Ransom a Man’s Soul’ is one of the most difficult hours of television I have ever watched. Like other critics, I found the sheer sadism and brutality of Jamie’s rape physically upsetting: I kept pausing the episode and walking around my house, trying to ease the tension and distress I felt in my body. For many

¹⁰⁸ Quoted in Laura J. Shepherd, *Gender, Violence and Popular Culture: Telling Stories* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), p. 72.

¹⁰⁹ Elaine Scarry, *The Body in Pain: The Making and Unmaking of the World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).

viewers, myself included, the worst parts of the rape sequences are not the violence at all, but the moments when Randall treats Jamie's body with care, telling him that 'these are Claire's hands' and stroking him gently (Figure 3.9). These scenes deliberately parallel the intimate scenes that are key to the programme's identity and appeal. They are shot in the same ways, lit with soft warm candlelight and composed largely of close-ups. Yet more importantly, the scenes share the same kinds of kinaesthetic meanings – the slow, steady movement of hands stroking skin



Figure 3.9 Horrific kinaesthetic empathy.

invites a highly tactile, embodied understanding of intimacy. In the previous chapter I argued that *Lost*'s final episode uses kinaesthetic repetition (or kinaesthetic memory) as a site for highly affective reflections on the programme's reading strategies. These moments in *Outlander*'s season finale function in a similar way, exploiting our connection to the programme's particular kinaesthetic tropes in order to elicit a heightened affective response to the scene – in this instance, the horror of seeing the kinaesthetics of desire transformed into something violent and intrusive.

On revisiting the episode a second time, however, I was surprised to discover a strong sense of hope in the final scenes between Claire and Jamie. As I have been arguing through this section, serial drama's employment of rape largely uses it as a narrative catalyst, a means through which to move a narrative forwards. Yet rape by 'itself does not produce a transformed self', argues Cahill, for 'only the healing process that follows the traumatic experience can properly be termed productive.'¹¹⁰ The key turning point in Jamie's recovery is his ability to touch Claire again, depicted once again through stroking hands – in this case, Jamie's hand moving slowly down Claire's (clothed) back (Figure 3.10). By repeating these kinaesthetics in order to reclaim them, the scene maintains the

¹¹⁰ Cahill, *Rethinking Rape*, p. 132.

hope that the circular patterns of serial narration – repetition with a difference – might be productive. The episode thus locates all of its affective charge – both horror and hope – in the power of kinaesthetic repetition, again offering something of a reflection on its particular preferred reading strategies.

Outlander's use of rape is ultimately highly

ambivalent: while it resists using Jamie's raped body to push the narrative forward

in 'To Ransom a Man's Soul', it somewhat negates this by returning to tell a highly conventional (and upsetting) rape story in the second season episode 'Faith' (2:7), in which Randall's rape of Fergus (the 10 year old pickpocket whom Jamie befriends [Romann Berrux]) acts as the catalyst that sets off Jamie and Randall's duel, Claire's miscarriage, and the Frasers's return to Scotland. Yet to return to Projansky's call for a better critical language for rape narratives (rather than better rape narratives per se), I maintain that considering the kinaesthetic meanings of these narratives may offer a better understanding of why these stories recur, what purposes they serve, and how we might begin to use them for more resistant ends.



Figure 3.10 Kinaesthetic repetition as hopeful healing.

Transforming the serial body

While questions of repetition and transformation have particular relevance to violence on television, they extend more broadly to serial television drama as a whole. The long-running nature of serial television allows us to become intensely familiar with the bodies we see on screen, aware of their vulnerability to the effects of time. For Claire Perkins, this structure of familiarity 'opens up unique paths for the construction of corporeal meaning on television',¹¹¹ and thus is central to serial television's kinaesthetic

¹¹¹ Claire Perkins, 'Dancing on My Own: *Girls* and Television of the Body', *Critical Studies in Television*, 9 (2014), 33-43 (p. 41-2).

reading strategies. Yet normative ideas of the body value stability over change: we tend to presume that the body exists optimally in a steady state, an assumption entrenched both in our culture's idealisation of youth, and in the link between health and bodily stability. Jason Mittell reiterates such assumptions of normative stability, arguing that the repetitive nature of seriality means that 'most television characters are more stable and consistent rather than changeable entities'.¹¹² While some television characters may have recognisably consistent traits and quirks that remain constant over time, the corporeal form of these characters will never meet this demand.

While vulnerability and susceptibility to change may be a kinaesthetic quality that transcends markers of identity, it tends to be normatively associated with particular bodies. Vulnerability 'presents us with the reality of fallibility, mutability, unpredictability and uncontrollability',¹¹³ argues Erinn Gilson, all concepts that tend to have negative (and feminine) connotations. Seriality is similarly structured around the inevitability of mutation, for, as Sean O'Sullivan argues, it has a 'distinctive commitment to the multiple rather than the single...that which frustrates rather than that which completes.'¹¹⁴ This is not to say that there is never any sense of completion in serial narration, of course, but simply to suggest that much of seriality's power derives from a sense of the partial and the transformative.¹¹⁵ I touched on some of these ideas in the previous chapter's discussion of the critical evaluation of the vast narrative, in which I suggested that evaluating such series *kinaesthetically* was better placed to appreciate the ways in which they spoke to their audience, which were often messy, anxious, and partial. In what follows I argue that the corporeal change and instability necessarily embedded

¹¹² Mittell, *Complex TV*, p. 133.

¹¹³ Erinn C. Gilson, *The Ethics of Vulnerability: A Feminist Analysis of Social Life and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 2014), p. 3.

¹¹⁴ O'Sullivan, 'Serials and Satisfaction', para 2.

¹¹⁵ This is particularly the case for contemporary television serials, which, even after they have officially concluded, continue to be encountered, circulated, and often brought back as reboots or continuations (see the recent return of programmes such as *The X-Files* (Fox, 1993-2002; 2016-), *Twin Peaks* (ABC, 1990-1991; Showtime, 2017), and *Gilmore Girls* [The WB, 2000-2006; The CW, 2006-2007; Netflix, 2016).

within serial narration may be another site through which these narratives ask to be kinaesthetically read, and may be powerfully placed to critique both our belief in the stable body and our dominant ideas of how gender is embodied.

The work of Judith Butler is particularly concerned with the intersections between gendered bodies, the production of normative ideals, and the possibility of embodied resistance. Appropriating the notion of 'performative speech' from J. L. Austin's linguistic theory, she argues that gender is produced always and only through the very acts that constitute it. This action does not simply signify an underlying gender or sexed body, but *produces* that gender and the material form of the body: '[t]here is no gender identity behind the expressions of gender'.¹¹⁶ Importantly, these actions gain their power and cohesion only through their constant repetition, allowing normative forms of gender and identity to become naturalised. Gender performativity cannot be equated to the performance of gender – it is not a playful form of agential action, and is rarely something a subject is conscious of doing. Rather, performativity is the very precondition through which we come to possess a coherent identity. In order to be recognisable as a subject in the world, both by others and by ourselves, we need to enact normative forms of gendered existence. Butler's work has been extensively taken up in the critical literature from a number of different perspectives, yet I believe that few scholars have drawn attention to how her argument is haunted by an unaddressed sense of both kinaesthesia and seriality. She describes the 'contour[s]' of the gendered body as 'produced over time, established again and again, the spatialised result of a certain repetition'.¹¹⁷ The 'ritualised' nature of gender performativity thus seems to make gender another form of serial narrative, produced through iterated repetitions. Yet as something based in the actions of the body, particularly as a very ordinary, 'mundane...form of

¹¹⁶ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble*, p. 25.

¹¹⁷ Judith Butler, 'Athletic Genders: Hyperbolic Instance and/or the Overcoming of Sexual Binarism', *Stanford Humanities Review*, 6 (1995), para 5. <<https://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/6-2/html/butler.html>>

their legitimization', performativity seems to be inextricable from kinaesthesia and its normative dimensions. Butler's theory of gender performativity is thus both a question of kinaesthesia and seriality.

While many theorists have challenged Butler for failing to properly account for material, embodied experience, only Carrie Noland has framed this challenge through the terminology of kinaesthesia. She criticises Butler's work for its 'meagre account' of both kinaesthesia and affect, which ignores the fact that it is 'ultimately kinaesthetic experience, the somatic attention accorded to the lived sensation of movement, that allows the subject to become an agent in the making of herself.'¹¹⁸ For Noland, the embodied experience of performing gender – the way it feels to enact certain conditioned movements – has the potential for offering resistant feedback. She focuses on Butler's belief that performative repetition is both 'a re-enactment and a re-experiencing', arguing that in separating these two degrees of repetitive action, Butler alludes to a qualitative difference between them. Noland claims that this is precisely a kinaesthetic difference: re-enactment operates discursively, repeating the same sets of meanings, but the affective qualities of re-experiencing gendered action produces sensations that can encourage us to alter the quality and variety of our movements.¹¹⁹ While Noland perhaps overstates our ability to access such kinaesthetic feedback – part of the power of gender performativity is the way it refuses to draw attention to itself – her work does offer a way to think about how the kinaesthetic *experience* of televisual bodies (both diegetically and in our own readings of them) may offer new ways of doing gender.

Earlier in this chapter I argued that Maura's experiences of navigating her gender identity are repeatedly expressed through particular kinaesthetic moments. In particular, dancing is a recurring trope throughout the series, reappearing at many of the key turning points in Maura's gender journey. As both a highly pleasurable yet often rigorously

¹¹⁸ Carrie Noland, *Agency and Embodiment: Performing Gestures / Producing Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2009), p. 170.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 191-94.

choreographed form of body movement, dance is a useful site to explore how kinaesthetic experience relates to norms of gender identity, embodiment and desire. In 'Best New Girl' (1:8), Maura dances rapturously with fellow trans women at Camp Camelia, the first time she feels surrounded by people who understand and see her real self. In the flashback episode 'If I Were a Bell' (3:8), twelve year old Maura dances in the bomb shelter in her front yard, the only space in which she can safely express and explore her gender identity. 'Flicky Flicky Thump Thump' (2:2) ends with Maura reconnecting with her body and her identity through the kinaesthetic experience of dance. Earlier in the episode Ali jokingly tells her parents that she 'heard you two are lesbians now'. While Ali is referring to the fact that they are currently sharing a house, Maura reacts badly to the statement due to her growing unease and uncertainty about where she finds her identity and pleasure. Maura struggles against Ali's attempt to label (however facetiously) her identity and desire within the dominant systems through which desiring acts and gendered bodies are recognisable. In other words, she displays a degree of discomfort with the ways in which her performance of gendered embodiment and gendered desire is dominantly legible.

Yet at the end of the episode, Maura finds a way to work through these feelings precisely through her kinaesthetic experience. She visits a club with her friends Davina and Shea (Trace Lysette). While Davina and Shea are soon invited to dance, Maura sits uncomfortably in her chair, clearly uneasy in the space. She is eventually pulled onto the dance floor and dances alone in front of a mirror. She waves her arms and hands in front of her face (Figure 3.11), bobs up and down with her hand pressed against the glass (Figure 3.12), and closes her eyes and sways her head in time with the music (Figure 3.13). Here, Maura's acceptance of her own body and desire is directly linked to her kinaesthetic experience of movement. Even though she does connect with her image in the mirror, her ability to recognise herself relies upon recognising herself *in movement*. Her self-affirming gaze, in sharp contrast to her suspicious and uncomfortable glances at the beginning of the scene, only emerges through an attention to her own kinaesthetic sensations. The scene stands as a key turning point in Maura's character, in which she reconciles how it

feels to embody her gender with how such embodiment might take visual form, a conflict that has been key to the narrative of the series. The scene thus suggests that kinaesthetic experience is the most powerful site through which awareness (and resistance) to gender norms and embodied form emerge; as Noland states, the 'kinaesthetic-somatic experience of performance...could be meaning-making as well as subservient to meanings already made'.¹²⁰ Noland asks what might happen if 'the body spoke back' when we force it to speak its gender;¹²¹ here, Maura's self-affirming experience of movement shows how kinaesthesia might be a site for expressing and experiencing objections to gender normativity.

In her work on *Transparent*, Amy Villarejo argues that Soloway 'carefully and deliberately constructs a way of looking at Maura that is expressive of Soloway's own feminist queer politics (for now, call it trans-affirmative and genderqueer)'.¹²² However, while Villarejo only links such a trans-affirmative structure of engagement with the gaze, I would argue that this 'way of looking at Maura' is not actually about *looking at her* at all, but a form of kinaesthetic awareness, engagement, and empathy. Importantly, I believe that such a kinaesthetic mode of constructing and recognising identity can be understood



Figure 3.11 Maura watches the movement of her hand in the club mirror.



Figure 3.12 She bobs up and down on the dance floor.



Figure 3.13 She sways in time to the music with her eyes closed.

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 193.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 194.

¹²² Amy Villarejo, 'Jewish, Queer-Ish, Trans, and Completely Revolutionary: Jill Soloway's *Transparent* and the New Television', *Film Quarterly*, 69 (2016), 10-22 (p. 11).

as queer. Jonathan Bollen, in his work on what he calls 'queer kinaesthesia', argues that kinaesthesia cannot be read off the surface of the body, but must be read as movement, in the ongoingness of movement, and in how that movement feels. He suggests that queerness might be experienced kinaesthetically through the way the body feels when disrupting normatively sexed and gendered actions: as he states, the 'performance of queer kinaesthesia would open a rift...between bodily matter and bodily action, between morphology and kinaesthesia, between what a body is and what a body does.'¹²³ Maura clearly accesses such a notion of queer kinaesthesia in the way she recognises a non-normative form of gender and desire through dance. Therefore, while Villarejo focuses exclusively on the gaze, I believe that *Transparent*'s radical gender politics are more effectively communicated and understood through a kinaesthetic reading – how it invites us to engage with Maura through a sense of queer kinaesthesia.

This structure of engagement is heightened through serial narration. The overarching serial narrative of *Transparent* is focused around Maura's transition, a narrative that has clear ties to our expectations that we watch bodies change over the course of a serial. Here, the dominant expectation might be that Maura's transition will be a formal one, as the visual appearance of her body changes to be attuned to dominant ideas of femininity. This expectation is reflected in the narrative itself, as Maura spends much of season three struggling to find a doctor to perform her gender reassignment surgery. However, Maura learns that her age and some heart abnormalities mean that not only is she barred from surgery, she can also no longer continue to take hormones. This complicates the dominant assumption that stories (particularly stories of transition) progress logically towards a clear ending, instead emphasising that gender transition is a serial narrative marked by repetition, circular patterns, and no definitive end. In this

¹²³ Jonathan Bollen, 'Queer Kinaesthesia: Performativity on the Dance Floor', in *Dancing Desires: Choreographing Sexualities On and Off the Stage*, ed. by Jane Desmond (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2001), pp. 285-314 (p. 304).

sense, it frustrates our desire to *watch* the straightforward formal transformation of Maura's body, and instead asks us to locate our connection to Maura elsewhere – an elsewhere that I believe is entirely grounded in the kinaesthetic body.

In the final episode of season three, 'Exciting and New' (3:10), the Pfeffermans take a holiday aboard a cruise ship. In one scene Ali meets Maura standing by the railing, staring out at the horizon, holding her collection of shapewear and Spanx. Maura explains her medical situation to Ali, and tells her that 'I think it's one thing to wear this stuff if you know you are going to transform into a new shape, but otherwise it just feels like a costume.' She goes on to tell Ali that due to her inability to fulfil the dominant linear narrative of transition, 'I feel like I'm nothing...I don't even know what or who I want anymore.' In a highly empathetic response, Ali takes the shapewear and suggests that they 'say a prayer'. She tells

Maura to 'face the ocean, raise your arms', and the two stand with their arms raised above their heads, shouting their farewells to the constrictions of dominant femininity together (Figure 3.14). While Maura



Figure 3.14 Ali and Maura share a moment of kinaesthetic transformation.

may feel like her inability to live a linear narrative of formal transformation makes her 'nothing', Ali instead recognises Maura through a coherent and powerful *kinaesthetic* identity. By inviting her to take up a confident stance of raised arms (an action with no specific gendered meaning), Ali seems to recognise that Maura's identity exists in *movement*, and that she always works through key moments in her life through her kinaesthetic experience. Once again, therefore, the scene invites us to read Maura's identity not through her visual form, but through the transformative potential of kinaesthesia – how the experience of being a body might offer affective resistance to dominant narratives and ideals.

Of course, considering corporeal change in serial television necessarily involves thinking beyond the diegetic contexts of the narrative. Bodies within television drama do not just exert narrative meaning, but also have the transformative potential to effect social change. Elena del Rio argues that it is precisely the ‘body’s movements and gestures [that] are capable of transforming static forms and concepts’,¹²⁴ a belief in the kinaesthetic body echoed in Noland’s claim that bodies contain ‘new ways of moving *that have not yet been parsed and organised by a single culture*.’¹²⁵ Kinaesthetic experience and kinaesthetic readings are not just a way in which the body speaks back to normativity, therefore, but a new form of organising and recognising body movements. Most obviously, placing a narrative of gender transitioning at the heart of a serial television text gives recognition and legibility to trans identities. The last two years have seen a proliferation of trans narratives within the media, as trans actors such as Laverne Cox, Riley Carter Millington, Rebecca Root and Brian Michael Smith have taken on newly prominent roles in serial television,¹²⁶ and Caitlyn Jenner’s *I Am Cait* (E!, 2015) documentary series gave the trans experience an unprecedented level of media visibility. In this sense, we cannot understand *Transparent* without recognising the way it places itself within the larger, ongoing story of transgender activism.

It is important to note that Amazon released each season of *Transparent* all at once, seemingly destroying the incremental structure of seriality. Charlotte Brunsdon argues that these changes in distribution mechanisms alter the narrative structure of television, suggesting that the rhythm and pace of these series shift to encourage binge-

¹²⁴ Elena del Rio, *Deleuze and the Cinemas of Performance: Powers of Affection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), p. 6.

¹²⁵ Noland, *Agency and Embodiment*, p. 90.

¹²⁶ Cox portrays Sophia in *Orange is the New Black* (Netflix 2013–); Millington debuted as Kyle in *EastEnders* (BBC One, 1985–) in 2015; Root plays the lead role of Judy in *Boy Meets Girl* (BBC Two, 2015), and Smith, who has been acting professionally for years in cis roles, used his role as trans police officer in Toine Wilkins in *Queen Sugar* (Oprah Winfrey Network, 2016–) to come out publicly.

watching.¹²⁷ However, while she is right to recognise the ‘aesthetic consequences’ of these new formats,¹²⁸ I would argue that focusing on these consequences alone ignores the other ways in which television is culturally meaningful and resonant. To return to Newcomb and Hirsch’s work on television’s role as a cultural forum, they claim that television ‘does not present firm ideological conclusions – despite its *formal* conclusions – so much as it *comments* on ideological problems.’¹²⁹ Newcomb and Hirsch here recognise that even if television’s formal features aim for a sense of completion, the ideological narratives it engages with remain entirely partial and contested. Therefore, I believe that just as television drama contributes to the serial narrative of rape culture I critiqued earlier in this chapter, it also contributes to a serial story of gender legibility, and thus can continue to be read as a serial narrative even it has not been distributed as such.

Following the end of the first season of *Transparent*, Amazon released a five-episode documentary series called *This is Me* (Amazon, 2015). Each episode of the series focused on a particular issue surrounding the trans community, such as the experience of coming out, of being misgendered, and negotiating gendered bathrooms – all topics explored throughout the first season of *Transparent*. It shares production staff with *Transparent* – Jill Soloway is the executive producer for both series, and Rhys Ernst and Zackary Drucker, co-producers and trans consultants on *Transparent*, direct and produce *This is Me*. Most obviously, it uses the same theme music, the same title design, and the same distinct aesthetic style – handheld, constantly moving cameras, rapid editing, and an emphasis on close-ups of faces – creating a sense of a shared ‘house style’. In this sense, the series is something of an organic extension of *Transparent*, and is often described as

¹²⁷ Charlotte Brunsdon, ‘Bingeing on Box-Sets: The National and the Digital in Television Crime Drama’, in *Relocating Television: Television in the Digital Context*, ed. by Jostein Gripsrud (Abingdon: Routledge, 2010), pp. 63-75 (p. 72).

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 73.

¹²⁹ Newcomb and Hirsch, ‘Television as a Cultural Forum’, p. 49.

‘pick[ing] up where the show left off’.¹³⁰ Consequently, I approach *This is Me* as a paratextual extension of *Transparent*. Elizabeth Evans frames transmedia storytelling as a reaction to the way the broadcast audience only ever engages with part of a fictional world, and thus is ‘encouraged to subsequently seek out information on those hidden parts via the extensions’.¹³¹ Drucker describes *This is Me* through the same terms of reference, stating that the series is a way to explore ‘the background, to reveal a more complex...rendering of the trans community’. Of course, *This is Me* is not a transmedia extension of *Transparent* in a strict sense, for it does not develop the diegetic narrative of the drama series. Yet it does extend the breadth of *Transparent*’s engagement with the trans experience, and its concern with exploring and circulating new ways of being gendered. Therefore, while we might aesthetically separate the two series down a fact/fiction dichotomy, on a kinaesthetic level, the two are doing the exact same thing: serially transforming cultural ideas of gender embodiment through the expressive potential of the moving body.

Like the transmedia extensions of *Lost* I discussed in the previous chapter, *This is Me* shares the same preferred reading strategies as *Transparent* itself, deliberately and explicitly speaking to the audience through the particular kinaesthetic ideas. With the (appropriate) exception of the first episode, ‘Closets’ (1:1), every episode of ‘This Is Me’ takes its trans protagonists on a journey through public space. In ‘Generations’ (1:2), Valerie Spencer and Lily Rubenstein travel around Los Angeles to visit key landmarks in the history of trans activism; in ‘From the Bathroom’ (1:3), Rooco Kayiatos and Mariana Mar visit public bathrooms; in ‘Right This Way’ (1:4), Petey Gibson and Mel Shimkovitz discuss gender pronouns while walking the Mattachine Steps,¹³² and in ‘And My Sisters’

¹³⁰ Jennifer Swann, ‘The Real-Life Version of ‘Transparent’ Picks Up Where the Show Left Off’, *TakePart*, 17 June 2015. <<http://www.takepart.com/article/2015/06/16/transparent-this-is-me>>

¹³¹ Elizabeth Evans, *Transmedia Television: Audiences, New Media, and Daily Life* (New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 11.

¹³² This stairway is named after and dedicated to the Mattachine Society, the pioneering gay rights group founded by Harry Hay in 1952.

(1:5), a group of trans women (including producer Zackary Drucker) create a public memorial to a trans woman who was murdered in 2014. 'And My Sisters' uses slow motion shots of the group of women walking, emphasising what one of the women, Van Barnes, declares: 'it's a revolutionary act to walk down the street.' The final episode thus explicitly concludes the narrative of travel that has been present throughout the series as a whole, emphasising the way that the struggle for political recognition is mediated through the body's ability to move through and take up public space. *This is Me* thus invites us to read the kinaesthetic body as possessing resistant, transformative potential.

By slowly building to the reclamation of public space in the finale, *This is Me's* project of kinaesthetic transformation works serially, regardless of whether the episodes are watched at once or over a period of time. What Brunsdon refers to as serial consumption's 'feelings of anticipation and loss'¹³³ are the same affects that structure this story of transgender activism, which revolves around small stories of violence and grief while continually looking towards a different kind of future. Each episode ends with title cards that offer suggestions for how to support the transgender community – using gender-neutral pronouns, or fighting for non-gendered bathrooms. Yet these suggestions are usually prefaced with information on the current experience of transgender people. 'And My Sisters' concludes by stating that 'Every 48 hours, a gender nonconforming person is killed somewhere in the world', and on the next screen, that 'Anti-transgender violence increases every year'. This title cards reject the idea of a straightforward narrative of progress, emphasising that like the rhythms of seriality itself, onwards movement is tentative and marked by repetition and reversal. Much like serial television's narratives of rape, this concluding text references the everyday anticipation of violence that structures life as a transgender person. Yet like *Outlander*, *This is Me* retains hope for a more positive future. The final title card is placed over a shot of the 'prayer pumps' the women make during the episode, suggesting that while the future may be inescapably

¹³³ Brunsdon, 'Bingeing on Box-Sets', p. 65.

oriented towards violence and fear, it also has the hope of a stronger, supportive transgender community. Like *Transparent* itself, *This is Me* continues to rely on the kinaesthetic affects of seriality, gesturing outwards towards a transforming (if ambivalent) future in which bodies might be understood and able to relate to one another in different ways.

This serial narrative of transformation is common to all activist groups: as Clare Hemmings notes, the narrative of the feminist movement is always ‘told as a series of interlocking narratives of progress, loss, and return’.¹³⁴ The affective pattern that Warhol links with seriality – the ‘ebb and flow’ – thus structures the experience of fighting for change in normative gender ideals, in that incremental gains are always marked by a continuing undertow of grief and struggle. In both *Transparent* and *This is Me*, then, the particular affective experiences associated with seriality play out across the kinaesthetic body, employed to rewrite normative ideas of gendered embodiment and gendered desire. Again, we are asked to read this narrative of serial transformation through a kinaesthetic reading strategy, or through attention to and understanding of the meanings and affects attached to how bodies move through and occupy space. Together, therefore, *Transparent* and *This is Me* both suggest that, to quote Erin Manning, ‘what we consider a unique form’ – both bodily and televisual form – is nothing ‘but the latest episode in a series of trans-formations’.¹³⁵

The Kinaesthetics of Home

Thus far this chapter has been focusing on the normative markers of identities attached to bodies, in terms of the ways in which they move and occupy space. However, this is not to imply that the body is a socially marked form set against a neutral backdrop.

¹³⁴ Clare Hemmings, *Why Stories Matter: The Political Grammar of Feminist Theory* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 3.

¹³⁵ Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. 94.

Rather, as I have been arguing repeatedly throughout this thesis, kinaesthesia involves thinking through bodies and spaces together: as Linda McDowell asserts, ‘bodies in space raise all sorts of questions about the space and place they occupy.’¹³⁶ Consequently, just as there are no neutral bodies involved in kinaesthesia or in television, there are no neutral spaces. Earlier in this chapter I suggested that feminist theory was deeply invested in kinaesthetic modes of thought and analysis. It thus comes as no surprise that this body of work shows a concern with interrogating the politics of space. For Sara Ahmed, feminist theory is ‘both embodied and embedded in local spaces of inhabitation, and...[is] something that moves’,¹³⁷ again linking the discipline with a kinaesthetic interrogating of embodiment, space, and movement. Yet her use of the word ‘inhabitation’ hints at a crucial component of any theory of gendered kinaesthesia – questions of habitation, of houses, and of home. In the previous chapter I argued that the vast narrative invites us to read space as ‘navigable space’, or as something to be moved across and journeyed through. In this chapter I have suggested that the ability to undertake such journeys is a privilege accessible to different bodies in different ways. Consequently, I believe that the female-oriented serial television dramas I am concerned with here are more interested in exploring how bodies *stick* to certain spaces, the attachments they form and the places to which they belong. Indeed, in both television studies and feminist theory, querying the normative dimensions of space necessarily involves contesting the notion of the home, which is the archetypal location for both disciplines’ objects of study. Female-oriented television programmes, in their engagement with the feminist politics of location, thus inevitably explore the meanings and values surrounding what I am calling the kinaesthetics of home.

As a space, the home is deeply gendered, predominantly associated with women and with a particularly normative brand of femininity. Most simply, the

¹³⁶ Linda McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place: Understanding Feminist Geographies* (Cambridge: Polity, 1999), p. 50.

¹³⁷ Sara Ahmed, ‘Whose Counting?’, *Feminist Theory*, 1 (2000), 97-103 (p. 99).

home is a feminine space of stasis and intimacy, the supportive foundation that allows men to leave to enter the public realm. Iris Marion Young begins her work on the home by tracing this narrative back to the Odyssey, arguing that the image of ‘Penelope sitting by the hearth and weaving, saving and preserving the home while her man roams the earth in daring adventures’ has echoed throughout norms of femininity for millennia.¹³⁸ Linda McDowell identifies a more recent origin for this normative narrative, arguing that during the nineteenth century the home became imbued with characteristics and connotations directly opposed to the developing capitalist economy, such as emotion, empathy, shelter, and rest.¹³⁹ Yet regardless of when this gendered division first emerged, it is clear that the dominant narrative is largely one in which the feminine form maintains the hearth to support the masculine body at work, for, to borrow Beverley Skeggs’s phrase, ‘female subjectivity is mapped as a fixed place on the itinerary of the male journey.’¹⁴⁰

Unsurprisingly, many feminist theorists continue to see the home as a space that needs to be transcended. Simone de Beauvoir asserts that the labour of housework traps women in a closed system: the woman ‘wears herself out running on the spot; she does nothing; she only perpetuates the present.’¹⁴¹ de Beauvoir thus again returns to the kinaesthetic language that is key to feminist theory, arguing that the home is a form of *kinaesthetic* entrapment for women, in which the labour of housework becomes a way of imprisoning women within normatively gendered space and normatively gendered forms of movement. Yet this continues to reiterate a value binary that is, of course, a false distinction: even if we do accept the image of a woman sitting by the hearth and weaving, or performing the repetitive tasks of caring for the home, these all involve all kinds of motion and movement, albeit a

¹³⁸ Young, *On Female Body Experience*, p. 123.

¹³⁹ McDowell, *Gender, Identity and Place*, p. 75.

¹⁴⁰ Beverley Skeggs, *Class, Self, Culture* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 52.

¹⁴¹ de Beauvoir, *The Second Sex*, p. 539.

circuitous, rhythmic form that tends to be valued less than goal-oriented progress. I believe that a deeper engagement with the kinaesthetics of home is necessary for feminist criticism, particularly criticism concerned with the political potential of other kinds of circuitous movement, such as serial narration.

In television, the idea of the home is specifically linked to the physical form of the house. There is a wealth of scholarship on the relationship between television and domestic space, which is largely interested in the match between the domestic context within which television is consumed, the domestic spaces depicted on the screen, and the particular modes of address through which television speaks to its audience. A full consideration of the relationship between television and domestic space is beyond the scope of this thesis; instead, I have modelled my approach in this chapter on Helen Wheatley, who suggests that if we accept that ‘television is inherently preoccupied by its domestic viewers and an assumed image of “home”’, then the close analysis of such representations of space can tell us something about how audiences are invited to understand their own position within such spaces.¹⁴² In other words, television’s ideas of home are a key site through which to trace its preferred reading strategies.

While Wheatley’s work is concerned with the Gothic genre specifically, I believe that television’s concern with the home suffuses serial television drama more broadly. Earlier in this chapter I argued that our embodied investment in the transformation of familiar bodies was a key source of pleasure and meaning in serial television. Yet the houses depicted within these programmes become as familiar to us as the characters, and hence are also key sites for engagement and affect.¹⁴³ Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock draw an explicit connection between the

¹⁴² Helen Wheatley, *Gothic Television* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2006), p. 20.

¹⁴³ Fan tourism practices often include visits to famous houses from television programmes, such as the exterior of the apartment block from *Friends* (NBC, 1994-2004), the White family home from *Breaking Bad*, or Carrie’s brownstone from *Sex and the City* (HBO, 1998-2004).

house and serial television drama. They describe the audience as ‘long-term tenants’ of such series, ‘liv[ing] into their familiarity’.¹⁴⁴ However, their analogy focuses solely on issues of style, referring to the aesthetic features of domestic space such as decor and lighting. In this sense, they miss the fact that what they term the ‘mutual inhabitancy’ between body and house, or between audience and television programme, can only exist through kinaesthesia. There is a certain congruency between the house and the body: Carsten and Hugh-Jones note that the house and the body have always been thought through one another – houses are understood as bodies, made in our own image, and bodies are understood as our original and permanent address.¹⁴⁵ Consequently, while home and belonging are abstract ideals, they take embodied form in the shape of the house. Houses thus become a key site through which ideas surrounding embodied belonging are circulated and contested, particularly on television. In what follows, I explore how houses and homes might be employed as part of serial television’s kinaesthetic reading strategies, particularly through how we are invited to read home as a relationship between a body and space.

Transparent invites us to engage with and understand its characters through the houses in which they live. Josh’s (Jay Duplass) split-level apartment is frequently shot in wide angles, suggesting that his house is less a space of intimacy than a performative space for his anxious masculinity. Shelley (Judith Light) and Ed (Lawrence Pressman) live within a gated community, its bland colours and dim lighting creating a sense of claustrophobia that parallels Shelley’s over-bearing personality and Ed’s passivity. Yet the Pfefferman’s family home is the most crucial location, and its transformation directly parallels that of Maura’s own gendered

¹⁴⁴ Jason Jacobs and Steven Peacock, ‘Introduction’, in *Television Aesthetics and Style*, ed. by Jacobs and Peacock (New York: Bloomsbury, 2013), pp. 1-20 (p. 12).

¹⁴⁵ Janet Carsten and Stephen Hugh-Jones, ‘Introduction: About the House - Levi-Strauss and Beyond’, in *About the House - Levi-Strauss and Beyond*, ed. by Carsten and Hugh-Jones (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), pp. 1-46 (p. 2).

body. The house undergoes repeated changes of ownership and design over the course of the series, reflecting the ways in which ideas of gender and embodiment are contested and transformed throughout the narrative.¹⁴⁶ Amy Villarejo suggests that Pfefferman's house 'serves as an apt figure for television itself. Recursive and permeable, this house/TV is itself a motor for continuity across generations'.¹⁴⁷ Here, Villarejo links the house specifically to the pattern of continuity and change, or flow and interruption, which structures serial narration. While Villarejo is largely interested in how the house signifies ideas of family and history, I argue that such ideas are predominantly explored, and hence invited to be read, kinaesthetically. In the season three episode 'To Sardines and Back' (3:3), the family gathers to celebrate Maura's seventieth birthday. After a typically explosive dinner, in which Maura announces her decision to undergo gender reassignment surgery and her wish to be called 'Mom' rather than 'Moppa', the group embarks on a game of sardines, in which one person (or a small group) hides and everyone else hunts for them. During the game Ali and Sarah discover Nacho, the pet turtle they lost as children who has been living in the ceiling vents for more than twenty years. The episode opens with a montage of Nacho's slow progress through the vents over this time period, depicting key events in the lives of the family (the first time Josh has sex with family babysitter Rita (Brett Paesel), Ali's first experience smoking marijuana) through the grates of the vent. Carsten and Hugh-Jones note that houses and bodies share 'a common anatomy and a common life history';¹⁴⁸ here,

¹⁴⁶ After Maura leaves for her new apartment at the beginning of season one ('Rollin' 1:3), Sarah and Josh argue over the ownership of the house, and who has the right to make changes to it. In season two, following Tammy and Sarah's acrimonious break-up in 'Kina Hora' (2:1), Josh and Raquel (Kathryn Hahn) live together with Josh's recently discovered son Colton (Alex MacNicoll) as they try and establish a normative family structure. When that relationship breaks down at the end of season two, Ali moves in to live with Josh, and in season three the occupancy of the house is used to explore the developing ties of intimacy between Ali and Josh, and between Ali and her lover Leslie (Cherry Jones).

¹⁴⁷ Villarejo, 'Jewish, Queer-Ish, Trans, and Completely Revolutionary', p. 13.

¹⁴⁸ Carsten and Hugh-Jones, 'Introduction: About the House', p. 3.

that history and that anatomy is kinaesthetically expressed through the body in motion, albeit the lumbering gait of a turtle.

Many critics were particularly entranced by Nacho in this episode. *The A.V. Club*'s Danette Chavez suggests that Nacho's 'seclusion and journey are highly symbolic' yet 'heartbreaking';¹⁴⁹ and Eric Adams, in a review of the whole season for the same publication, specifically singles out Nacho as a highlight.¹⁵⁰ Adams also notes that audiences were captured by Nacho, pointing to the large number of people talking about him in the #transparent Twitter hashtag as proof that he became something of a 'minor social media celebrity'. I would argue that audience and critical attachment to Nacho reflects the way the series uses him as a powerful part of its kinaesthetic reading strategy. There is something oddly moving about Nacho's slow and heavy gait through the roof of the house, reflecting the weighty passage of time and the ever-accumulating histories of both family life and serial television. Here, the weight of serial television becomes grounded within the kinaesthetics of home, or the embodied experience of moving through a space repeatedly through time.

Yet if Nacho's gait invites us to kinaesthetically read the familial past of the Pfeffermans, the kinaesthetics of the game of sardines open up a space for imagining the future. The game involves bodies occupying space in non-normative ways, hiding in closets and squeezing behind doors. It unfolds in the dark, meaning that the house loses the visual signifiers we have become familiar with over the course of the three seasons. Instead, the overwhelming sense we gain from the scene is of the pleasures of playing with and transforming the kinaesthetic experience of the house. By placing this scene of kinaesthetic joy after the big familial revelations earlier in the episode, the episode again

¹⁴⁹ Danette Chavez, 'Transparent is All Fun and Games Until Someone Gets a Turtle', *The AV Club*, 16 November 2016. <<http://www.avclub.com/tvclub/transparent-all-fun-and-games-until-someone-gets-t-246012>>

¹⁵⁰ Erik Adams, "'Is the Turtle George Bluth Sr.?' and Other Lingering *Transparent* Thoughts", *The AV Club*, 26 September 2016. <<http://www.avclub.com/article/turtle-george-bluth-sr-and-other-lingering-transpa-243159>>

invites us to read the transformations of the family through the particular kinaesthetics of dwelling within a space, kinaesthetics that are always in motion and open to change. Again, this ties into *Transparent*'s broader interest in transforming dominant ideas of gender. For while normative narratives frame femininity as 'fixed', and de Beauvoir may presume that a house is a trap, *Transparent* suggests that the kinaesthetic experience of dwelling within a house – an experience so often linked to femininity – is always an experience of both continuity and change, both a heavy burden and a joyous form of play. Again, therefore, *Transparent* invites us to read its narrative of transforming embodiment (particularly normatively gendered embodiment) through kinaesthesia.

The affective joy involved in the game of sardines also points to another crucial aspect of the kinaesthetics of home and belonging – its ties to the pleasures of physical proximity to and intimacy with other people. In the previous chapter I described televisual intimacy as referring to both the proximate and the familiar, and these twin meanings also structure the embodied experience of feeling at home within a space. The home is a space for physical intimacy and desire, both of which negotiate particular normative ideas about how gender, bodily form, and embodied experience intersect. Sara Ahmed describes sexual orientation as 'a matter of residence; of how we inhabit spaces as well as "who" or "what" we inhabit spaces with',¹⁵¹ drawing a link between the desires of the body and the feelings of home. *Outlander* is hugely concerned with home; much of the first season revolves around Claire's attempt to find her way 'home' to the twentieth century, and the second half of the first season and season two focuses on the homes she creates with Jamie in Scotland and France respectively. Yet where *Transparent* explores home through the quotidian yet evolving relationship between bodies and houses, *Outlander* is arguably more invested in home as a question of intimate relationships *between*

¹⁵¹ Sara Ahmed, *Queer Phenomenology: Orientations, Objects, Others* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2006), p. 5.

bodies, particularly sexual relationships. There is a wealth of scholarship on the pleasures of watching sex on screen, and there is undoubtedly work to be done on the kinaesthetics of television sex. For the purposes of this chapter, however, I am limiting my focus to the connections between sex, normative ideas of gender and desire, and feelings of home and belonging, a connection that I believe is held together by the way these ideas share and invite particular kinaesthetic readings.

Outlander repeatedly draws a link between Claire's sexual pleasure and her experience of home. In 'Sassenach' (1:1), Claire and Frank use sex as a means of reconciliation following an argument about Claire's fidelity during the war. In her voice over narration Claire states that 'sex was our bridge back to one another. The one place where we always met.' Here, Claire frames sex as an experience of home: a place of meeting and re-connection after travelling individually. Later in the season, sex is again presented as the means through which Claire accesses a sense of belonging and home, although this time with Jamie. In 'The Devil's Mark' (1:11), Jamie rescues Claire from being tried for witchcraft, and the two flee for his family home of Lallybroch. During this trip Claire remains ambivalent about the prospect of returning to Jamie's house as his wife. She expresses these concerns in her voice-over narration, which is paired with a montage of Jamie and Claire riding across the Scottish countryside.

'Jamie spoke repeatedly of Lallybroch, detailing the life we'd have together, the life he'd always imagined. I tried to listen. I tried to invest in Lallybroch as my home. I tried to imagine a life for us both, but I felt adrift, anchorless in a running sea.'

Immediately after this line, the montage dissolves into a night scene in which Claire and Jamie have sex. The following morning Jamie tells Claire that he has brought her home, and she discovers that he has taken her back to the stones at Craigh na Dun. While he leaves her at the stones with the expectation that she will return to her 'home' of the twentieth century, Claire decides to stay with Jamie, returning to

his camp and asking him instead to ‘take me home to Lallybroch.’ The organisation of this sequence clearly places sex as the catalyst for Claire’s changing understanding of home and of where (and with whom) she belongs. It is the experience of physical intimacy with Jamie that anchors her and remedies her sense of being ‘adrift’, establishing the ties of belonging and safety that characterise the experience of home. Again, this is presented to us kinaesthetically: there is little dialogue in the darkly lit sex scene and both Jamie and Claire remain fully clothed, encouraging us to read the intimacy between them less as a form of visual spectacle than a kinaesthetic experience. *Outlander* thus invites us to understand home and belonging as an embodied experience of intimacy that exists between people, once again communicating its key themes through particular kinaesthetic dynamics.

Importantly, Claire’s sex scenes overwhelmingly focus on her pleasure. In her work on the erotics of television, Helen Wheatley notes the ways in which *Outlander*’s presentation of female desire feels particularly revolutionary, promising to ‘bring female desire “up close” as never before.’¹⁵² Interestingly, Wheatley’s audience research suggests that audiences (particularly women) prefer watching erotic content on handheld devices such as tablets. Wheatley concludes that ‘the very close and privatised view of erotic imagery afforded by watching on a tablet particularly appeals to women.’¹⁵³ However, while Wheatley considers this largely in terms of visual pleasure, I would argue that this ‘close and privatised view’ is inseparable from a sense of close and privatised kinaesthesia. Wheatley herself does note that viewing on a tablet ‘creates an intensely intimate space’ within the space of the home,¹⁵⁴ thus implicitly drawing a connection between erotic proximity and the kinaesthetics of feeling at home within a space. Of course, it is impossible to determine how much of the audience actually watches *Outlander* on a tablet

¹⁵² Wheatley, *Spectacular Television*, p. 218.

¹⁵³ Ibid., p. 206.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 207.

(although this may be above average in the UK due to the series's restriction to the Amazon Prime streaming service). Rather, my point here is simply that for women, engaging with erotic content seems to involve both a degree of bodily intimacy *and* spatial intimacy, feelings that are key to the kinaesthetics of home. Again, therefore, analysing the presentation of Claire's pleasure on screen tells us something about how it might be read by audiences off screen, in terms of the connection between the kinaesthetics of sexual desire, and those of spatial belonging.

We can also read *Outlander*'s focus on female pleasure as a challenge to normative ideas of gendered kinaesthesia. Maureen Ryan suggests that *Outlander* is 'among the shows doing something revolutionary in their depiction of how adults relate to each other, in bed and out of it.'¹⁵⁵ While Ryan focuses her discussion on how the series unapologetically caters to the female gaze, I would extend this idea to argue that *Outlander*'s presentation of sex challenges normative ideas of gender and embodiment. It is important to note that in focusing on Claire's pleasure, *Outlander*'s sex scenes differ kinaesthetically from dominant representations of sex on screen. In the first episode 'Sassenach' (1:1), Frank performs cunnilingus on Claire, kneeling between her thighs as she sits on a table in the crumbling basement of Castle Leoch. In the sex scene between Jamie and Claire from 'The Devil's Mark' (1:11) that I discussed earlier, Jamie uses his hands to stimulate Claire. Each of these moments demonstrates how a focus on female pleasure subverts the normative kinaesthetic dynamics of screen sex, emphasising clitoral stimulation over phallic penetration. This can be (kinaesthetically) read as a critique of norms that equate the female body to something that can be penetrated and claimed, again demonstrating how *Outlander*'s engagement with gender politics, and the efficacy of its critique, relies upon our kinaesthetic engagement.

¹⁵⁵ Ryan, "Outlander," The Wedding Episode and TV's Sexual Revolution'.

Yet if, as I have been arguing, *Outlander*'s presentation of sex is inextricable from its exploration of ideas of home and belonging, then we need to consider how this kinaesthetic critique might extend to gendered ideas of spatial belonging. Rachel Moseley and Gemma Goodman note that in *Outlander*, the violence that Randall inflicts on Jamie's body is a 'literalisation of the English violence towards and colonisation of Scotland as a territory'.¹⁵⁶ Colonisation and the marking of territory is a typically masculine activity; indeed, the land is usually feminised in order to be framed as a space for conquest. Yet the different kinaesthetics of *Outlander*'s sex scenes – focusing on the pleasure that Claire takes from the bodies of her lovers – might similarly be understood as a claiming of territory, one more about Claire's recognition of home than as a form of masculinised conquest. *Outlander*'s kinaesthetics here are thus perhaps not so different from the vast narratives I explored in the previous chapter, emphasising the exploration and experience of navigating a space. Yet in writing such spaces on the body, particularly the male body, *Outlander* challenges the gendered travel narrative of male conquest and exploration and feminine stasis and support, rewriting these kinaesthetics into a narrative of the pleasures of feeling at home.

Performing Kinaesthesia in the Workplace

Of course, I do not want my discussion of the kinaesthetics of home to imply that home is the only space that has relevance and meaning for women or other non-normative bodies and identities. To do so is to risk reiterating the normative binary between the feminine space of the home and the masculine spaces of employment and the public sphere. Nirmal Puwar argues that the 'arrival of women and racialised minorities in spaces from which they have been

¹⁵⁶ Rachel Moseley and Gemma Goodman, 'Why Academics are Interested in the Male Body in *Poldark* and *Outlander*', *The Conversation*, 2 June 2015. <https://theconversation.com/why-academics-are-interested-in-the-male-body-in-poldark-and-outlander-42518>

historically or conceptually excluded is an illuminating and intriguing paradox', telling us something about both the legacies of the past and hopes for a more progressive future. In the final part of this chapter, then, I want to turn to consider how (non)normative bodies come to occupy the work spaces of television, and what this tells us about the normative gender politics (and kinaesthetics) that structure the television industry. In line with the focus of my thesis, I am less concerned with the 'realities' of television production than with how industrial narratives come to bear upon the various texts and paratexts of television, and hence become another frame through which the audience is encouraged to read and understand a television programme. This shifting focus between text and industry has something of a precedent within television studies: Jonathan Gray notes both television itself and television studies have always been characterised by the 'back and forth between art and industry'.¹⁵⁷ Amy Villarejo argues that '[t]elevision *requires* that we shuttle between the macroindustrial and the microindividual; it is a machine that produces its value from that very movement.'¹⁵⁸ Following Villarejo, then, I end this chapter with some thoughts on how evaluating the kinaesthetics of television might facilitate this shifting play between textual analysis and industrial politics.

Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks and John T. Caldwell astutely note that 'the off-screen production of media is itself a cultural production, mythologised and branded much like the on-screen textual culture that media industries produce.'¹⁵⁹ They also reiterate the belief that focusing on how production culture negotiates and reproduces particular relations of power has much to offer our understanding of media products. This is particularly the case with contemporary television, in

¹⁵⁷ Jonathan Gray, *Television Entertainment* (New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 19.

¹⁵⁸ Amy Villarejo, *Ethereal Queer: Television, Historicity, Desire* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), p. 154.

¹⁵⁹ Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John T. Caldwell, 'Introduction: Production Studies: Roots and Routes', in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, ed. by Mayer, Banks, and Caldwell (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 1-12 (p. 2).

which the consumption of the text is often inseparable from behind-the-scenes paratexts that circulate around it. These paratexts range from articles in the news media and online media criticism sites, to officially produced behind-the-scenes videos, and to the social media presence of creative personnel. As I outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the unfolding, long-running nature of serial television means that these paratexts tend to be consumed in parallel with the consumption of the programme itself.¹⁶⁰ This ensures that for audiences, the cultural meanings and narratives surrounding television production are offered as paratextual frames through which to read the programme itself.

The television industry remains an overwhelmingly masculine space. Martha M. Lauzen's study of employment in prime-time television revealed that women are underrepresented at all levels of the industry: women make up twenty-five per cent of the individuals employed in key creative roles across broadcast networks, cable channels, and Netflix, and forty per cent of the characters within the programmes themselves.¹⁶¹ However, Miranda J. Banks argues that such quantitative statistics obscure the ways in which gender is experienced in the industry, arguing that we would do better to look not just at who is employed, but the labour that workers actually perform – in other words, the gendering of work, not simply the gender of workers. For Banks, the hierarchies of power that structure television production affect the shape and meaning of the final product,

¹⁶⁰ Many television drama series have explicitly serialised behind-the-scenes paratexts. Shows such as the revived *Doctor Who* (BBC 2005–) and *The Walking Dead* (AMC 2010–) use 'companion series' that air immediately following the broadcast of the episodes, which include actors and crew members discussing the episode with a host: see *Doctor Who Confidential* (BBC Three, 2005–2010) and *Talking Dead* (AMC 2011–). *Lost* and *Battlestar Galactica* (SciFi, 2004–2009) both distributed weekly podcasts in which the showrunners discussed the week's episode. *Orphan Black*'s (BBC America, 2013–) 'Inside Orphan Black' videos are released on the BBC America website after each episode. Additionally, many cast and crew members engage with audiences directly through social media platforms, such as Twitter, Facebook, and Tumblr, again offering opportunities for audiences to combine diegetic and production narratives.

¹⁶¹ Martha M. Lauzen, 'Boxed In: Portrayals of Female Characters and Employment of Behind-the-Scenes Women in 2014-15 Prime-Time Television'. <http://womenintvfilm.sdsu.edu/files/2014-15_Boxed_In_Report.pdf>

meaning that for the (feminist) media scholar, ‘the studies of production, industry, and text are always integrally intertwined.’¹⁶² I would add that questions of labour are always questions of how workers’ bodies act within workplace spaces. In this sense, television production has the power to determine ideas about how bodies are gendered and what gendered bodies can do, ideas that may directly shape the final products, and the meanings we make from them.

Prior to the release of *Transparent*, much attention was devoted to the high numbers of transgender people employed by the production. This was partly in response to criticism of Jeffrey Tambor’s casting from the trans community, who were frustrated that such an important trans role had been given to a cis actor.¹⁶³ There is a long history within the screen media industry of casting cisgender actors in transgender roles,¹⁶⁴ which marginalises and obscures the existence of transgender actors. Alexandra Howson notes that ‘labour markets favour particular kinds of bodies and, by implication, people’,¹⁶⁵ highlighting how excluding certain bodies from entering work spaces and engaging in work activities undermines their identification as recognisable subjects. In recognition of the barriers that transgender people experience in seeking employment in the production industries, Jill Soloway developed what she termed a ‘Transformative Action’ project to employ as many transgender employees as possible. Aside from Tambor,

¹⁶² Miranda J. Banks, ‘Gender Below-the-Line: Defining Feminist Production Studies’, in *Production Studies: Cultural Studies of Media Industries*, ed. by Vicki Mayer, Miranda J. Banks, and John T. Caldwell (New York: Routledge, 2009), pp. 87-98 (p. 96).

¹⁶³ See Kwame Opam, ‘Casting Cis Actors in Trans Roles has Reached its Breaking Point’, *The Verge*, 20 September 2016. <<http://www.theverge.com/2016/9/20/12983104/trans-actors-hollywood-representation-jeffrey-tambor-emmys-speech>>

¹⁶⁴ In the cinema, notable examples include Hilary Swank in *Boys Don’t Cry* (Kimberley Pierce, 1999) Jared Leto in *Dallas Buyers Club* (Jean-Marc Vallée, 2013), and Eddie Redmayne in *The Danish Girl* (Tom Hooper, 2015); and in television, Rebecca Romjin in the US version of *Ugly Betty* (ABC, 2006-2010), Jeffrey Carlson in *All My Children* (ABC, 1970-2011), and Julie Hesmondhalgh in *Coronation Street* (ITV, 1960–)

¹⁶⁵ Alexandra Howson, *The Body in Society: An Introduction* (Cambridge: Polity, 2013), p. 2.

all other trans roles in the series are performed by trans actors,¹⁶⁶ trans applicants were favoured for below-the-line roles, Zackary Drucker and Rhys Ernst were hired as trans ‘consultants’, and the first trans staff writer, Our Lady J, joined the crew at the beginning of season two.

Soloway’s ‘Transformative Action’ project was not simply a question of numbers. Rather, reflecting Banks’s call to focus on the qualitative experience of labour, Soloway sought to make the set as inclusive and safe for her transgender workforce as possible. Before the beginning of production, she asked Ernst and Drucker to discuss trans issues with the entire production staff. All of the bathrooms on set are gender-neutral, a crucial fact considering that public bathrooms are a site of anxiety and violence for transgender people. Soloway’s ‘Transformative Action’ is thus not simply about addressing the absence of transgender people within the industry, but ensuring their kinaesthetic comfort on set – that they can occupy and move within a space that recognises and supports their gender identities. Soloway’s project was heavily publicised in the press material, functioning as a key paratext through which audiences accessed and were invited to read *Transparent*. In other words, by encouraging audiences to appreciate the kinaesthetics of *Transparent*’s production – which bodies were allowed to enter normatively coded industrial spaces, and the affordances made to respect their kinaesthetic experience – *Transparent*’s production culture comes to bear directly on the kinaesthetic meanings of the programme itself.

We can trace this connection between production and text most explicitly through *Transparent*’s practices of performance. In the previous chapter I argued that performance is a key site through which kinaesthetic reading strategies operate, and throughout this chapter I have repeatedly suggested that *Transparent*

¹⁶⁶ In total, fifteen trans people have speaking roles in season one, some of whom are not portraying explicitly trans characters (which is another crucial representative gain, as trans actors are almost never cast in cis roles).

is particularly invested in the performing body – the dancing body, the walking body, the body at play – as a site for pleasure, affect, and gender trouble. This investment arises specifically through the ways in which the programme’s actors are trained. Prior to the beginning of production, Soloway hired Joan Scheckel to work with the cast and creative team. Scheckel is a filmmaking and storytelling coach who runs workshops for screen productions to determine what she calls the ‘nugget’ of their narrative. Crucially, Scheckel’s workshops revolve around physical play, trust-building exercises, and the experience of embodying emotion and affect. She asks participants to dance, to roll on the floor, and to touch one another – in other words, she uses the body’s movement and occupation of space as a means to access story (Figure 3.15). ‘I cannot separate the writing of the story from the performance, direction or delivery of that story’, she states on her website.¹⁶⁷ ‘Call it creative synaesthesia.’ I believe that Scheckel’s ‘creative synaesthesia’ could be more accurately defined as



Figure 3.15 Joan Scheckel working with participants during a workshop.

‘creative kinaesthesia’, as it sees kinaesthetic experience – such as dance, acrobatics, and interpersonal proxemics – as the means through which to produce a screen text.

While Scheckel has been receiving heightened attention recently due to her work on *Transparent*, she remains uncredited, and most of her film work has similarly been largely invisible to audiences.¹⁶⁸ Therefore, while Scheckel’s work is

¹⁶⁷ See Joan Scheckel, ‘The Technique™’, *Joan Scheckel Filmmaking Labs*, October 2014. <<http://www.joanscheckel.com/the-technique>>

¹⁶⁸ Scheckel’s uncredited film work includes *Whale Rider* (Niki Caro, 2003), *Little Miss Sunshine* (Jonathan Dayton and Valerie Faris, 2006), and *Wadjda* (Haifaa Al-Mansour, 2012).

crucial to the final product – a *Marie Claire* profile states that all films she contributes to bear ‘her stamp’ – it remains something of a form of invisible labour. This is largely due to its gendered nature. In her pioneering work on emotional labour, Arlie Hochschild argues that such work is the work of women: ‘women have the job’, she states, ‘of creating the emotional tone of social encounters.’¹⁶⁹ Such affective structures, much like the kinaesthetic comfort of Soloway’s set, ‘remain largely invisible because the kind of labour that gives rise to them – emotional labour – is seldom recognised by those who tell us what labour is.’¹⁷⁰ It is fitting that Scheckel is emerging from the background precisely through her work on *Transparent*, a series concerned with reconfiguring normative ideas of embodiment and gender. Soloway has stated that she wanted to resist the ‘militaristic’, hierarchical structure of television production, replacing it with what she terms a ‘more feminine approach.’¹⁷¹ Scheckel herself sees her workshops as fighting for a change in filmmaking culture, promoting what she terms ‘the century of women’,¹⁷² or the ‘rise of...the feminine.’¹⁷³ In an interview with Scheckel, Jennifer Kushner describes her technique as ‘an amazing process to support female and underrepresented filmmakers because there aren’t many models of storytelling out there for us to tell our stories.’ Scheckel’s use of kinaesthesia as a creative form of production thus is understood as a specifically feminine form of producing and circulating meaning in screen media, a means of resisting the normatively gendered kinaesthetics of television culture.

¹⁶⁹ Arlie Russell Hochschild, *The Managed Heart: Commercialisation of Human Feeling* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), p. 20.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 197.

¹⁷¹ Taffy Brodesser-Akner, ‘Can Jill Soloway do Justice to the Trans Movement?’, *The New York Times*, 29 August 2014. <https://www.nytimes.com/2014/08/31/magazine/can-jill-soloway-do-justice-to-the-trans-movement.html>

¹⁷² Lauren Sandler, ‘Best Supporting Player: Joan Scheckel’, *Marie Claire*, 28 August 2013. <<http://www.marieclaire.com/celebrity/a7897/best-supporting-player/>>

¹⁷³ Jennifer Kushner, “Conflict is Not Our Only Dance Step.” Joan Scheckel Explains The Technique’, *Film Independent*, 24 March 2015. <<http://www.filmindependent.org/blogs/conflict-is-not-our-only-dance-step-joan-scheckel-explains-the-technique/#.VjdocWThAy4>>

It is not my intention to explore the experience or the success of these new production practices, as these questions lie beyond the scope of my thesis. Rather, what I am interested in is the degree to which the kinaesthetic and gendered meanings attached to *Transparent*'s production come to bear directly on how it feels to watch the programme. I believe that as well as setting up paratextual frames though which to interpret the programme more broadly, these industrial narratives directly shape the ways in which we read the text itself, and our experience of its formal properties and affective qualities. Critic Drew Grant, in an article on Scheckel's work for *Transparent*, suggests that '[t]he Pfeffermans feel more intimate and real than any other television family'.¹⁷⁴ Elsewhere in this thesis I have explored the relationship between television's structures of reality and intimacy, and its kinaesthetic reading strategies. In *Transparent*, the 'intimate' and 'real' feeling of the Pfefferman family is felt through kinaesthesia. The family is always engaging in small, ordinary moments of physical proximity: feeding one another, foot rubs, dancing. They move with and around one another with care and love, something that, I would argue, derives directly from Scheckel's kinaesthetic practices of connection and communication. Director of Photography Jim Frohna states that 'I'm proud of how the show feels...we collectively build a new language alongside the visuals.'¹⁷⁵ This language is, I would argue, entirely a kinaesthetic language. The particular structures of feeling through which the programme addresses its audience, through which the audience reads and experiences the narrative, and through which much of the series's gender politics are mediated, must ultimately

¹⁷⁴ Drew Grant, 'Play as Work: 'Transparent' Guru Joan Scheckel Brings Technique to NYC', *Observer*, 19 May 2015. <<http://observer.com/2015/05/play-as-work-transparent-guru-joan-scheckel-brings-technique-to-nyc/>>

¹⁷⁵ Valentina I. Valentini, 'Shooting 'Transparent': From Rehearsal to Lenses to Intimate Family Drama', *IndieWire*, 7 October 2014. <<http://www.indiewire.com/2014/10/shooting-transparent-from-rehearsal-to-lenses-to-intimate-family-drama-69326/>>

be read through the kinaesthetics of the programme, its paratexts, and its production.

Conclusion

In *Outlander*'s 'The Devil's Mark' (1:11), Claire and her friend Geillis Duncan (Lotte Verbeek) are imprisoned on charges of witchcraft. In the Western context (and in many other cultures), witchcraft is overwhelmingly associated with women, particularly with unruly female bodies.¹⁷⁶ The two are suspected of witchcraft partly due to their proficiency with herbs and the fact that both work as healers, but also due to the smallpox vaccine scar they bear on their arms, which the superstitious townsfolk believe is 'the Devil's mark'. The presence of witchcraft is read through the embodied form of the body, the actions it performs, and the particular (work) spaces it enters and occupies. In other words, witchcraft is read *kinaesthetically*: through the ways in which the body moves and what spaces it can exist within. And again, witchcraft becomes associated with non-normatively gendered bodies – Claire and Geillis, as two time-travellers from the twentieth century, bear bodies marked with different forms and different kinaesthetics that are illegible to normative frames of reference of the eighteenth century.

In this chapter I have argued that kinaesthesia has a normative dimension that reiterates dominant ideas of gender and desire. I have suggested that female-oriented serial television drama, in encouraging kinaesthetic reading strategies, both reproduces and resists these normative forms of gendered kinaesthesia. Engaging with the identity politics of these series thus necessarily involves reading how they negotiate and exploit

¹⁷⁶ Mary Daly argues that medieval witchhunts aimed to 'break down and destroy strong women' (p. 183) in order to police a particular vision of femininity, ensuring that the 'massacre of women was deemed not only normal but normative' (p. 202); similarly, Anne Llewellyn Barstow sees the 'witchcraze' as a form of gendered natural selection, in that the survivors learnt to conform to and embody norms of submission, passivity, and domesticity that defined the roles of women for centuries to come. See Barstow, *Witchcraze: A New History of the European Witch Hunts* (London: Pandora, 1994) and Daly, *Gyn/Ecology: The Metaethics of Radical Feminism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978).

the meanings of the body in motion, meanings that both reiterate and resist particular norms. Importantly, I have attempted to show how these kinaesthetic gender politics play out across many of the traditional sites where television and gender have intersected – the affective structures of seriality, the spaces of the home, the politics of the industry. In this sense, while these series may be interested in challenging the traditional ways in which we understand and tell stories about gendered embodiment and desire on television, their strategies of address and enunciation continue, much like the vast narratives I discussed in the previous chapter, to revolve around the features that make serial television the medium it is.

However, bodies are not just defined against normative ideals – bodies are defined against one another. Indeed, while Claire and Geillis are imprisoned in an outdoor pit waiting to stand trial, Claire sees a starling and shares a memory of watching a murmuration on Brighton beach. When Geillis asks why the birds move in formation, Claire responds ‘to protect them from the falcons. Safety in numbers.’ Claire thus recognises that movement might be act as a particular form of care, community, and solidarity. Indeed, many of the ideas I have touched upon in this chapter – family, intimacy, violence, and vulnerability – are grounded in the relational dynamics *between* people. In the next chapter, I expand upon these ideas to consider the degree to which kinaesthesia acts a mode of relation, or the means through which we relate to one another as fellow bodies in space.

CHAPTER FOUR: KINAESTHETIC EMPATHY WITH SERIAL NARRATIVES

In the first episode of NBC's *Hannibal* (2013-2015), Hannibal Lecter (Mads Mikkelsen) diagnoses protagonist Will Graham (Hugh Dancy) with a pathological empathy disorder.

Hannibal: What he has is pure empathy. He can assume your point of view, or mine, and maybe some other points of view that scare him. It's an uncomfortable gift, Jack. Perception is a tool that's pointed on both ends.
(‘Aperitif’, 1:1)

Will's disordered ability to relate to others fits within a broader trend in contemporary quality drama, in which (largely male) protagonists are positioned somewhere on the autism spectrum in order to give them preternatural investigative abilities.¹ Although *Hannibal* takes a slightly different approach to other instances of this trope – where most of the men that populate television drama struggle to empathise with and understand others, Will feels too much – it continues to reiterate a deep anxiety about the persistence of empathy in the contemporary world. This anxiety can be traced across the academy, the popular media, and various cultural forms, including television, where it emerges within a wide range of different genres. Reality television explores the transformative potential of walking in another's shoes;² comedy series explore how community structures operate amongst marginal identities in a mediated world (*Master of None* [Netflix, 2015–], *Please Like Me* [ABC, 2013–], *Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt* [Netflix 2015–]); and animation series aimed at (though not exclusively consumed by)

¹ Other examples of this trend include Sherlock Holmes (Benedict Cumberbatch/Jonny Lee Miller) in *Sherlock* (BBC One, 2010–) and *Elementary* (CBS, 2012–), Gil Grissom (William Petersen) in *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000-2015), Gregory House (Hugh Laurie) in *House* (FOX, 2004-2012) and Saga Norén (Sofia Helin) in *Bron/Broen* (DR1/SVT1, 2011–).

² See Kristyn Gorton's work on discourses of contagious emotion and empathy in reality television. “‘There's No Place Like Home’: Emotional Exposure, Excess and Empathy on TV”, *Critical Studies in Television*, 3 (2008), 3-15.

children explore how empathy might be the key to saving the world (*Adventure Time* [Cartoon Network, 2010–], *Steven Universe* [Cartoon Network, 2013–]).

Yet while television programmes show a commitment to working through the question of empathy's endurance, the critical literature on the medium itself seems to have largely given up the belief in empathetic relationships. In an elegiac essay on the demise of analogue television, Karen Lury suggests that digital television destroys the 'common culture of empathy to which [television] once aspired'.³ While she is right that television's digital developments are changing its cultures of community and connection, she is far too eager to discount the existence of empathy in the digital world. Lury's retrospective focus is something of a failure of the imagination: while television may not possess the same sort of 'common culture' as it once did, this is by no means to suggest that it can no longer inspire empathy at all. Mourning the demise of television's mass appeal seems suspiciously akin to other pre-emptive accounts of the 'death' of television, such as Elihu Katz's assertion that the 'television of "sharedness" – of nation-building and family togetherness – is no longer with us'.⁴ Yet Katz's celebrated institutions of the nation and the family, while offering some degree of affective support and camaraderie, have always been sites for the regulation of normative identities. In this sense, a common culture is defined as much through the people it leaves out as those it embraces, and changes in the shared cultures produced through television may be cause for optimism rather than regret.

Helen Piper takes similar issue with Lury's argument, warning that we cannot presume that certain values have been rendered defunct in the world of contemporary television. While she recognises that television's structures of collective belonging may be more 'precarious' and 'volatile' today, they can still be

³ Karen Lury, 'The Loss of the Contingent in Digital Television', in *Television as Digital Media*, ed. by James Bennett and Niki Strange (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 181–203 (p. 201).

⁴ Elihu Katz, 'Introduction: The End of Television?', in *The End of Television? Its Impact on the World so Far*, *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 625 (2009), 6–18 (p. 7).

located within our television dramas. ‘Television drama may foster a sense of communal responsibility, suffering or belonging in a multitude of ways’, she maintains, ‘not least by involving shared ways of doing things, and by positing an ordinary world, recognisable as “our” own.’⁵ Susan Leigh Foster shares Piper’s belief in the persistence of empathy, suggesting that empathy remains ‘entwined with the apparatuses, increasingly digitalised, that hurtle images of bodies from one side of the world to the other’.⁶ Together, Foster and Piper paint a portrait of a form of empathy accessible through both the digital and the dramatic arts. Yet more interestingly, that sense of empathy seems to be particularly linked to the moving body – Piper bases her empathy in shared action, and Foster in the body’s (mediated) movement around the world. Rather than mourn the concept altogether, then, I believe that we can and must continue to turn to empathy in order to think through our relationship with television and the kinds of fellow-feeling it offers us. Empathy persists in our encounters with television, particularly in the kinaesthetic readings through which we engage with serial dramas.

This chapter aims to engage with these debates by thinking through the fundamental question of any theory of televisual kinaesthetics – how exactly do we relate to the bodies we see on our screens? While I have thus far focused on kinaesthesia as an organising principle in the vast narrative and a form of both reiterating and challenging norms of identity, these discussions have been underpinned by a fundamental belief that kinaesthesia somehow connects our bodies to those on our screens. This idea is crucial to all theories of kinaesthesia, which depart from a belief that watching a moving body involves feeling *with* the moving body, in what is known as kinaesthetic empathy. I focus on two recent serial dramas in this chapter: *Hannibal* (NBC, 2013-2015) and *Sense8* (Netflix, 2015-2017). The

⁵ Helen Piper, ‘Broadcast Drama and the Problem of Television Aesthetics: Home, Nation, Universe’, *Screen* 57 (2016): 163-83 (p. 174).

⁶ Susan Leigh Foster, *Choreographing Empathy: Kinaesthesia in Performance* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011), p. 168.

two series share an interest in exploring how bodies connect with one another, and how these connections play out across the intersections between affective and physical relationships. Each series approaches this question from opposite ends of the affective spectrum: *Sense8* presents a progressive and radical vision of utopian collective identity, whereas *Hannibal* focuses on the horrific aspects of the blurring the (corporeal) boundary lines between self and other. Yet they both narrativise kinaesthetic empathy through the ways their respective characters relate to one another and to the world, and thus both present kinaesthetic empathy as the preferred reading strategy for making sense of their narratives.

Hannibal is a relatively loose adaptation of Thomas Harris's series of novels about cannibal psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter, drawing freely from characters and events from *Red Dragon* and *Hannibal*.⁷ Harris's work and characters are most well known from the film adaptation of *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991). *Hannibal* takes place before the events of the film, imagining Hannibal's life as a practicing psychiatrist. The narrative combines episodic storylines in which Will solves crimes with an overarching serial narrative of Hannibal's long, slow manipulation of Will. It is produced by Bryan Fuller and combines many of the themes that run through his work as a whole,⁸ such as death, consumption, community, and a focus on heightened aesthetics. The series has been celebrated for its visual style: *The A.V. Club*'s Sonia Saraiya and Todd VanDerWerff describe it as 'TV's most beautiful current show';⁹ and Kristy Worrow suggests that the show uses 'principles of art such as balance, unity, rhythm, pattern...so that [the visuals]

⁷ See Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (New York: Dell, 1981); and *Hannibal* (London: Random House, 1999).

⁸ See *Wonderfalls* (Fox, 2004), *Dead Like Me* (Showtime, 2003-2004), *Pushing Daisies* (ABC, 2007-2009) and *American Gods* (Starz, 2017-).

⁹ Sonia Saraiya and Todd VanDerWerff, 'Hannibal's Powerful Visuals Make it One of the Best Shows of 2013', *The A.V. Club*, 6 December 2013. <<http://www.avclub.com/article/hannibals-powerful-visuals-make-it-one-of-the-best-200586>>

can be decoded like high art.¹⁰ Yet the series combines this more conventional aesthetic appeal with a deeply sensorial address, for its beautiful aesthetic tableaux are largely composed of the flesh, blood, bones, and viscera of humans and other animals. Angela Ndalians concludes that while the series does have much aesthetic appeal, it is ‘without a doubt one of the most powerfully affect-driven shows to ever grace the television screen...inflict[ing] a cacophony of sensory assaults’ on both its characters and its audience.¹¹

Yet interestingly, all of these critics return to the question of relationality, suggesting that *Hannibal*’s core theme and key appeal is how it uses its aesthetic and affective power to explore ideas of intersubjectivity and community relationships, which play out between both Hannibal and Will and between audience and narrative. Saraiya and VanDerWerff conclude that the ‘central beauty’ of the show is ‘this vulnerable, emotional relationship between a damaged man and a devil who would be his protector’; Worrow refers to the parallel between the show’s ‘seduction’ of the audience and Hannibal’s seduction of Will; and Ndalians suggests that the audience, ‘much like Will...become victims’.¹² The power and attractions of *Hannibal*’s aesthetic appeal, then, are inextricable from what it has to say about relationships. *Hannibal* thus engages with questions of aesthetics, affect, sensations, and relationships between bodies, which are mirrored through how the audience reads and relates to the text itself.

Sense8 is part of Netflix’s collection of original programming, produced by Lana and Lilly Wachowski and J. Michael Straczynski. The series tells the story of eight strangers who discover that they are able to share emotions, experiences, and abilities: Capheus (Aml Ameen/Toby Onwumere), a matatu driver in Nairobi who

¹⁰ Kirsty Worrow, “It’s Beautiful” – Hannibal’s Seduction Through Visual Pleasure’, *In Media Res*, 22 September 2015. <<http://mediacommons.futureofthebook.org/imr/2015/09/22/it-s-beautiful-hannibal-s-seduction-through-visual-pleasure>>

¹¹ Angela Ndalians, ‘*Hannibal*: A Disturbing Feast for the Senses’, *Journal of Visual Culture* (2015), 279-84 (p 279).

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 283.

tries to provide for his mother who is sick with AIDS; Kala (Tina Desai), a devoted Hindu scientist in Mumbai who is struggling with ambivalent feelings towards her upcoming wedding; Lito (Miguel Ángel Silvestre), a closeted film star in Mexico City; Nomi (Jamie Clayton), a trans activist and hacker in San Francisco; Riley (Tuppence Middleton), an Icelandic DJ living in London at the beginning of the series; Sun (Doona Bae), a Korean businesswoman and expert martial arts fighter; Will (Brian J. Smith), an idealistic Chicago cop; and Wolfgang (Max Riemelt), a violent safe-cracker in Berlin. The eight characters are deliberately diverse in terms of nationality, sexuality, and gender identity, and the series was shot on location across the world. *Sense8* shares many of the themes that can be traced across the Wachowskis' oeuvre: challenging the boundaries of the body, investigating new modes of community, and celebrating a queer spirit of fluidity.¹³ Like *Hannibal*, the series uses spectacle (namely in its action sequences) to tell a story explicitly concerned with empathetic relationships between self and other, particularly relationships that operate as mediated forms of proximity at a distance. Emily Asher-Perrin, in review for *Tor.com* titled 'Working Toward the Empathetic Revolution', suggests that the Wachowskis, 'both of them trans women at a moment in time when it is often perilous to live that truth, bring a vernacular to mainstream film and television that is often neglected.'¹⁴ I would suggest that this vernacular might be kinaesthetic empathy. In a similar way to my discussion in the previous chapter of how Jill Soloway and Joan Scheckel uses kinaesthesia to tell stories differently, then, the Wachowskis use kinaesthetic empathy as a particular kind of storytelling language.

For Rebecca Solnit, empathy offers a transformative mode of storytelling that can be likened to an experience of travel: it takes you out of yourself and into

¹³ These ideas can be traced in *The Matrix* trilogy (*The Matrix* [1999]; *The Matrix Reloaded* [2003] *The Matrix Revolutions* [2003]), *Cloud Atlas* (2012), and *Jupiter Ascending* (2015), all of which revolve around the soul's ability to reach out across spatial, temporal, and corporeal boundaries.

¹⁴ Emily Asher-Perrin, 'Working Toward the Empathetic Revolution', *Tor.com*, 15 July 2016. <<http://www.tor.com/2016/07/15/working-toward-the-empathetic-revolution-sense8/>>

the perspective and the point of view of someone else, and lets you travel around in their shoes.¹⁵ ‘Empathy is a first of all an act of imagination,’ she suggests, ‘a storyteller’s art, and then a way of travelling from here to there.’¹⁶ There is something about this description that aligns nicely with understandings of television, which, as I have been outlining throughout this thesis, seems to offer an experience of travel. It is thus unsurprising that kinaesthetic empathy becomes a key reading strategy for the serial dramas I am concerned with here. In the final chapter of this thesis, I aim to tie together many of the threads I have been weaving throughout my thesis as a whole. Like the navigable spaces and spectacular movements of the vast serial narrative, *Hannibal* and *Sense8* evoke ideas of travel, using the transformative potential of empathy to take the audience on a journey through space and through other people. Like the politics of embodied identity I explored in chapter three, *Hannibal* and *Sense8* critique normative ideas of how bodies should relate to one another, and explore what happens when we try to transcend those corporeal boundaries. Rather than mourning the loss of television’s common cultures of empathy, then, I argue that empathy persists and endures in its kinaesthetic dimensions, and remains a key framework through which we are invited to read and relate to our television dramas.

Empathy and the Moving Body

Empathy is something of a slippery term, often used interchangeably with terms such as sympathy and compassion. While it is difficult to determine exactly where sympathy stops and empathy begins, most accounts agree that sympathy involves a feeling we have *for* the experience and emotions of another person – for example, feeling pity or sorrow for their suffering. Empathy, in contrast, is the ability to share the feelings

¹⁵ Rebecca Solnit, *The Faraway Nearby* (London: Granta, 2011).

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

of another: as David Howe phrases it, ‘empathy puts me in your emotional shoes’.¹⁷ Yet in staking out these definitional territories, most scholars end up making the landscape of empathy even more difficult to navigate. Howe goes on to refer to the etymological roots of the word, claiming that sympathy involves ‘hav[ing] feelings (*pathos*) that are the same as (*sym*) those of the other’, whereas empathy is about ‘enter[ing] into (*em*) the feelings of the other’,¹⁸ seemingly contradicting his earlier distinction between empathy as shared emotion and sympathy as directed emotion. Michele Aaron defines empathy as an emotional response towards another, or ‘feeling for the other’, and sympathy as a simulated experience of ‘feeling as the other’.¹⁹ Yet she searches for a third term that consists of ‘feeling with or towards the other’, seeking a ‘withness’ of feeling that has radical power beyond the empathy-sympathy dualism.²⁰ These scholars share the belief that there are different orientations of fellow-feeling – *for*, *with*, *as*, *towards*, *alongside* – and that these have different values and different properties, but cannot seem to agree on which orientations belong to which labels. For the purposes of this thesis, I retain the popular definition that empathy involves a form of perspective taking, of walking in the shoes of another person and sharing their feelings and point of view, reserving sympathy for feelings directed *at* others, such as pity.

Yet the focus on the trajectories by which we come to share the feelings of others obscures a more interesting question – what exactly do we mean by feelings? In order to solve the problem of how we come to share, to simulate, or to surmise the feelings of others, we need to understand exactly what shape and form those feelings take in the first place. Most work on empathy and sympathy is explicitly concerned with specific

¹⁷ David Howe, *Empathy: What It Is and Why It Matters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 12. See also Suzanne Keen, ‘A Theory of Narrative Empathy’, *Narrative*, 14 (2006), 207-36; Alex Neil, ‘Empathy and (Film) Fiction’, in *Philosophy of Film and Motion Pictures: An Anthology*, ed. by Noël Carroll and Jinhee Choi (Blackwell, 2006), pp. 247-59; and Martha C. Nussbaum, *Upheavals of Thought: The Intelligence of Emotions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001).

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

¹⁹ Michele Aaron, *Death and the Moving Image: Ideology, Iconography, and I* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), p. 172.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 172.

emotions such as sorrow, happiness, and fear, or with the larger affective experiences of pain and trauma. Yet the metaphors we use to talk about empathy frame it as a primarily *sensory* experience. To empathise, we must walk in another's shoes, see through another's eyes, and take on the perspective and point of view of another person. Throughout this thesis I have been arguing that metaphors are grounded in embodied experience and thus have much to tell us about how we encounter and experience the world. The phrases and figures of speech through which we talk about empathy thus suggest that it emerges primarily through embodied sensation: the ability to be moved by and for others only arises through the ability to move through the world.

In proposing such an embodied concept of empathy, I am seeking (much like my interest in the sensory qualities of aesthetics) to restore its historical legacy. The contemporary conflation between empathy and emotion disregards the history of the concept, in which empathy always played out across a fully embodied subject. The debate surrounding the idea of fellow-feeling is an old one, recurring throughout the work of Samuel Johnson, David Hume and Adam Smith, all of whom explored the moral value of sharing the feelings (both emotional and sensory) of another person.²¹ Yet as a term, empathy is relatively new, emerging in the work of late nineteenth century German philosophical aesthetics. This school of thought was concerned with the perceptual psychology of artistic and architectural form and experience – in other words, the ways in which looking at art involved the sensations of the whole body. Robert Vischer coined the term '*Einfühlung*' to describe the experience of encountering an aesthetic object,²² which was later translated by Edward Titchener into the English 'empathy'. For Vischer, aesthetic experience involves 'feeling into' an image, object, or space, in which the viewer

²¹ See David Hume, *A Treatise of Human Nature*, ed. by David Fate Norton and Mary J. Norton (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000 [1740]); Samuel Johnson, *A Dictionary of the English Language* (London: Longman, 1990 [1755]); and Adam Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, ed. by D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1982 [1759]).

²² Robert Vischer, 'On the Optical Sense of Form: A Contribution to Aesthetics', in *Empathy, Form, and Space: Problems in German Aesthetics, 1873-1893*, ed. by Harry Francis Mallgrave and Eleftherios Ikonomou (Santa Monica: Getty Centre for the History of Art and the Humanities, 1873), pp. 89-123.

‘projects its bodily form’ into that of the object.²³ This was not simply a question of imaginative projection or emotional simulation, but involved a sense of pleasure derived directly from the sensations of the body. Vischer believed that ‘a visual stimulus is experienced not so much with our eyes as with a different sense in another part of our body’,²⁴ and argued that something that looks beautiful does so because it is experienced as ‘a harmonic series of successful self-motions’.²⁵ The heights of a cathedral inspire awe because the body shares a feeling of rising; the curves of a sculpture are pleasing to look at because the body shares their vibrant motion. The experience of empathy thus unfolds at the intersection between vision and embodied experience. ‘Not only do I see gravity and modesty and pride and courtesy and stateliness’, wrote Titchener, ‘I feel or act them in the mind’s muscles. This is, I suppose, a simple case of empathy.’²⁶

Writing at the same time as Vischer, Vernon Lee and Clementina Anstruther-Thomson proposed an almost identical theory of aesthetic empathy. Vernon Lee was an author and essayist who wrote extensively on aesthetic experience, and, together with her partner Anstruther-Thomson, was interested in exploring the relationship between visual art and the spectatorial body. Anstruther-Thomson describes the experience of looking at a vase in terms very similar to Vischer’s ‘feeling into’: ‘Other parts of our body will insist on telling us about the vase, too’, she suggests, for the ‘lifting pattern’ on a vase ‘thrusts into our own body a feeling of lifting which we cannot help realising.’²⁷ Lee discusses the same concept in relation to a more general idea of form:

‘We attribute movement to motionless lines and surfaces; they *move, spread out, flow, bend, twist*, etc. They do...what we should feel ourselves doing if we were

²³ Ibid., p. 92.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 98.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 97.

²⁶ Edward Bradford Titchener, *Lectures on the Experimental Psychology of the Thought-Processes* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), p. 21.

²⁷ C. Anstruther-Thomson, *Art and Man: Essays and Fragments* (London: John Lane, 1924), p. 139.

inside them. For we *are* inside them: we have felt ourselves, projected our own experience into them.²⁸

Lee was writing at the beginning of the twentieth century, and her work refers to static forms of visual art such as painting and sculpture. However, I believe that her ideas have much applicability to understanding how we read and respond to moving images. In this passage, Lee not only refers to the movement sensations inspired by visual art, but also draws a clear link between metaphorical speech and embodied empathy, suggesting that our descriptive language reveals our embodied experience of such works. Lee's understanding thus aligns with my own interest in the embodied metaphors we use with regard to television. Lee goes on to suggest that this ability to describe the properties of art through our experiences of embodied perception is 'at the bottom of the phenomenon of *Empathy*' (original emphasis).²⁹ Interestingly, she also claims that '[a]mong the facts which Painting is set to tell us about things, the most important...is Locomotion', believing that art has more power to inspire feelings of force and movement than sentiment and emotion. Lee is perhaps too quick to dismiss emotion entirely, for our feelings and sentiments clearly play a huge role in our empathetic relationships with both people and artworks. Yet in arguing for the importance of motion, Lee's work draws a productive link between aesthetic appreciation and kinaesthesia, suggesting that the former might involve some degree of the latter.³⁰

Following Lee's focus on locomotion and embodied empathy, I want to argue that the root of empathy is precisely the body's kinaesthetic sensations. From Vischer's belief that we 'move in and with the forms' of art³¹ to the popular analogy of walking in another's shoes, it seems that empathy is not just based in the body, but in the body as a *moving* entity. Susan Leigh Foster argues that both Vischer and Titchener see empathy as possessing a kinaesthetic element, even if they do not name it: 'part of what one felt about

²⁸ Vernon Lee, 'Recent Aesthetics', *Quarterly Review* 199 (1904): 420-43 (p. 433) [original emphasis].

²⁹ Vernon Lee, *The Beautiful: An Introduction to Psychological Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1913), p. 63.

³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

³¹ Vischer, 'On the Optical Sense of Form', p. 101.

the experience of the other included what the other's body was doing – the rhythm and intensity of action, and the location of the body in space'.³² In this sense, I believe there is a clear benefit in thinking kinaesthesia and empathy together. They possess similar histories, sharing a long tradition of somewhat opaque thought before crystallising as concepts in the late nineteenth century. Yet the two are related in content as well as contemporaneity – both are understood as a sense that bridges and articulates the relationship between inside and outside, and between self and other. Deirdre Sklar suggests that while visual perception involves gazing upon an object from a distance, 'empathetic kinaesthetic perception implies a bridging between subjectivities';³³ and Guillemette Bolens argues that in the relationship between Self and Other, '[t]he locus of recognition is kinaesthetic'.³⁴ So it seems that kinaesthesia is not simply the sensation of the movement of our own bodies, or the way we occupy space, but might also be a means through which we relate to the other bodies around us. Consequently, I argue that kinaesthesia and empathy are entirely interconnected with one another: the sense of kinaesthesia kindles a structure of empathy, and structures of empathy rely upon the kinaesthetic sensations of the body.

Hannibal very overtly presents empathy as a mode of relating to others that necessarily relies upon kinaesthesia. Protagonist Will Graham works as a criminal profiler for the FBI, accompanying the officers to grisly crime scenes in order to discern the motivations and mindsets of the perpetrators. Will is particularly well-suited to this job due to his heightened capacity for empathy: to quote the psychological profile Hannibal offers Will's boss Jack Crawford (Lawrence Fishburne) in 'Aperitif (1:1), Will has 'pure empathy. He can assume your point of view'. However, in visiting the crime scenes, Will does not so much 'assume' the visual perspective of the murderers as fully embody them,

³² Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 128.

³³ Deidre Sklar, 'Five Premises for a Culturally Sensitive Approach to Dance', in *Moving History / Dancing Cultures: A Dance History Reader*, ed. by Ann Dils and Ann Cooper Albright (Middletown: Wesleyan University Press, 2001), pp. 30-32 (p. 32).

³⁴ Guillemette Bolens, 'Kinaesthetic Empathy in Charlie Chaplin's Silent Films', in *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee Reynolds and Matthew Reason (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 143-56 (p. 151).

re-enacting their violent crimes. 'Aperitif' (1:1) begins with a depiction of Will's empathy process – a depiction that recurs repeatedly without the series with aesthetic consistency, using the same sounds, shot choices, and colour schemes. The sequence begins with a close up shot of Will closing his eyes (Figure 4.1), then cuts to a black screen across which a band of light swings like a pendulum (Figure 4.2). This pendulum shot marks a shift in the soundtrack, in which any diegetic sounds of the crime scene (such as sirens) are

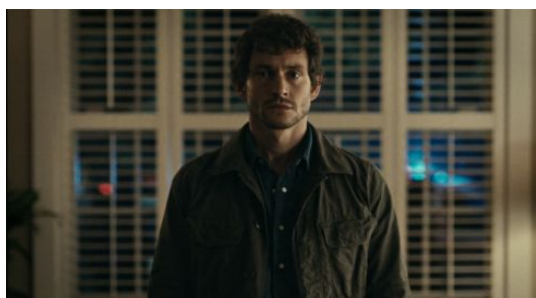


Figure 4.1 Will gazes upon the crime scene

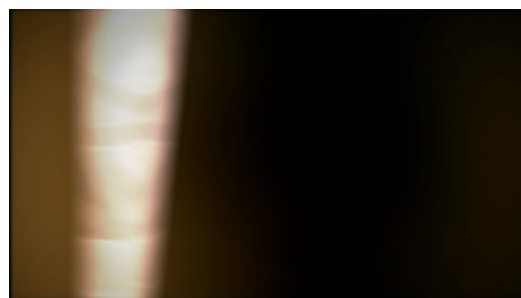


Figure 4.2 The pendulum of light swings across the screen.



Figure 4.3 Will walks backwards away from the crime scene.

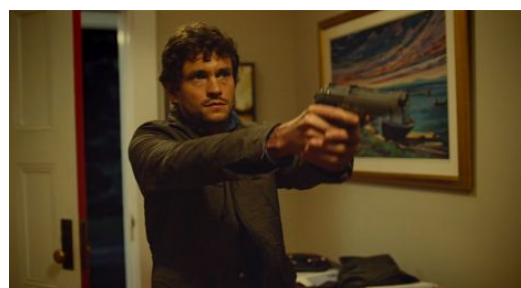


Figure 4.4 Will kinaesthetically re-enacts the crime.

muted and replaced with a steady drumbeat. Following the black screen we return to the crime scene, which is now lit with a warm glow, as opposed to the cooler blues used throughout the rest of the series (which reflect the standard colour palette for television crime series). We see shots of Will walking backwards (Figure 4.3), intercut with the pendulum swinging across a shots of the crime scene, restoring it to the moment of the crime. Will then re-enacts the murder (Figure 4.4), usually narrating his actions with a detached and clinical tone. This sequence recurs repeatedly throughout the series, and while there are slight variations, it is striking in its consistency.

These sequences are also highly consistent in the way they present Will's empathy: as something that is fully embodied, felt and experienced across the kinaesthetics of the body in motion. While the initial focus on Will's closed eyes may

seem to suggest that this is simply another form of vision – of seeing through the eyes of another – the scene as a whole implicates his entire body in the structure of empathy. Corinne Painter suggests that ‘the precondition of empathy is the perception of a physical, animated body’,³⁵ and so it is with Will, who can only empathetically enter the mindset of a murderer by re-animating their actions through his own body. The pendulum shot marks the shift between disembodied vision and the body: the warm glow evokes a bodily heat as opposed to a cool gaze, the rhythms of the drums clearly connotes a heart beat, and Will’s backwards pace indicates that his empathy necessarily emerges from movement. Indeed, Will’s moving body is always the focal point of the sequence after the first initial pendulum shot: in ‘Aperitif’ (1:1), the camera stays behind Will’s shoulder as he walks backwards, focusing on the movement of his shoulders as he walks; in ‘Amuse-Bouche’ (1:2), we see a close-up shot of Will’s feet walking backwards; and in ‘Trou Normand’ (1:9), the camera immediately circles around to be positioned behind Will, shifting our identification to the subject of embodied vision rather the object of the gaze. All of these shots locate the origins of empathy in the moving body, presenting it as the necessary precursor for connecting with the other.

While Will’s empathy is narratively framed as being directed towards the perpetrators of the crimes, I would argue that Will also empathises with the crime scenes as aesthetic objects. Much has been made of the ways in which *Hannibal* presents its murder scenes as grisly aesthetic tableaux: Angela Ndalians describes the murdered bodies as ‘displayed like performance art pieces’,³⁶ and Emily Nussbaum suggests that the series uses corpses as ‘fungible art supplies, like clay or oil paint.’³⁷ Following these critics, I argue that Will’s kinaesthetic empathy is presented as being directed towards art as much as towards particular human bodies. In *Hannibal*, then, much like in the historical

³⁵ Corinne Painter, ‘Appropriating the Philosophies of Edmund Husserl and Edith Stein: Animal Psyche, Empathy, and Moral Subjectivity’, in *Phenomenology and the Non-Human Animal: At the Limits of Experience*, ed. by Corinne Painter and Christian Lotz (Dordrecht: Springer, 2007), pp. 97-115 (p. 106).

³⁶ Ndalians, ‘*Hannibal*’, p. 279.

³⁷ Emily Nussbaum, ‘To Serve Man: The Savoury Spectacle of *Hannibal*’, *The New Yorker*, 29 June 2015. <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/06/29/to-serve-man>>

scholarship on empathy, interpersonal and aesthetic empathy are entirely imbricated. In 'Fromage' (1:8), Will investigates a murder in which a man has been turned into a living cello: the neck of a stringed instrument has been placed in his mouth, using his vocal chords as the strings. After the initial shot of the swinging pendulum, Will walks backwards and takes a seat in the empty auditorium, gazing upon the body arranged on the stage. Will stretches his arms out to rest on the backs of the chairs on either side of him, expanding his body in a kinaesthetic approximation of the swelling sensations and emotions of listening to a symphony orchestra. He then moves to the stage to 'play' the instrument, stating that 'my sound is my design.' Here, Will 'feels into' the scene not simply as a murder but as a performance piece, kinaesthetically enacting the roles of both symphony spectator and musician. In this sense, Will stands as something of a 'model reader' for the audience, demonstrating the preferred reading strategy for consuming grisly tableaux. Will's empathy, as an explicitly *kinaesthetic* empathy that works for both engaging with people and with aesthetic objects, is thus presented as the preferred reading strategy for *Hannibal* itself.

Of course, we do not participate in *Hannibal*'s murder scenes to the same degree as Will does. However, a lack of explicit re-enactment does not mean that kinaesthetic empathy is absent: on the contrary, such a mediated experience of embodied interaction is key to the very structure of kinaesthetic empathy. In order to disentangle this relationship between mediation and materiality, we can turn to Edith Stein's theory of empathy.³⁸ As a PhD student under Edmund Husserl, Stein's work falls into the same broad areas as the other German phenomenologists of the time, interested in questions of intersubjectivity and the phenomenology of empathy. She undertakes an impressively astute and clear discussion of how the relationship between self and other is structured in empathetic relationships, which has much to offer our understanding of media spectatorship. For while Vischer claims that in *Einfühlung* 'I am mysteriously transplanted

³⁸ Edith Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, trans. by Waltraut Stein (Washington DC: ICS Publications, 1989 [1917]).

and magically transformed into this Other',³⁹ Stein maintains that empathy is entirely reliant on some degree of separation between observer and empathic object. She argues that empathy is primordial in experience but not primordial in content, by which she means that we feel another's experience as our own while still being fully aware that the experience does not belong to us. In her discussion of watching the spectacular body movements of an acrobat (something that clearly has potential for thinking about how we experience and read body movement in our moving image media), she suggests that 'I am not "one with" the acrobat but only "at" him. I do not actually go through his motions but *quasi*.'⁴⁰ Consequently, while she agrees with Vischer that empathy asks us to feel into the body of another person, she frames this more as a mediated structure of connection than one of projection. As she says, an observer is 'accompanied...by [the] movements' of another person.⁴¹ Stein sees empathy as the bodily experience (particularly the kinaesthetic experience) of feeling and moving with another person, but maintains that there must remain some degree of separation between observer and object.

It is this relationship between proximity, separation, and mediation in Stein's theory that gives it so much applicability to television. In Adriano D'Aloia's discussion of Stein's work, he states that 'the empathising subject is side-by-side with the empathised subjects, and their adjacent position implies a paradoxical proximity at a distance.'⁴² Proximity at a distance is, of course, the fundamental feature of the relationship between audiences and television, in which distant events can be experienced closely in the intimate space of the home. In her critique of debates surrounding audience engagement, Gorton questions '[w]hy do we have to have distance *or* closeness? Why can we not be savvy enough to understand that...viewers are not always either distanced or close'?⁴³

³⁹ Vischer, 'On the Optical Sense of Form', p. 104.

⁴⁰ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, p. 16.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 17.

⁴² Adriano D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy: Spectator Involvement in the Film Experience', in *Kinaesthetic Empathy in Creative and Cultural Practices*, ed. by Dee and Matthew Reason Reynolds (Bristol: Intellect, 2012), pp. 93-107 (p. 95).

⁴³ Kristyn Gorton, *Media Audiences: Television, Meaning, and Emotion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2009), p. 39.

Beverley Skeggs and Helen Wood make a similar argument, suggesting that television ‘produce[s] a “beside-ness”, a binding to others as well as a dramatic distancing’.⁴⁴ Television, it seems, fosters a mode of relation that involves a sense of accompaniment, besideness, and a shifting play between proximity and distance, all things that similarly structure kinaesthetic empathy. In chapter two of this thesis I discussed Misha Kavka’s work on affective realities, in which she argues that our affective relationship to television cannot be dismissed as second-hand or vicarious, but must be recognised as a real structure of engagement.⁴⁵ Following Kavka, I believe that kinaesthetic empathy allows us to productively interrogate the very real relationships we form with television, for both stand as mediated experiences that produce a sense of (real) embodied presence and proximity.

Like *Hannibal*, *Sense8* is not only narratively concerned with empathy, but specifically presents this empathy as a kinaesthetic mode of relation. The eight protagonists (or Sensates) are able to share their sensory experiences, effectively travelling their consciousnesses between their bodies. Consequently, the emotional bonds they forge derive directly from their ability to understand one another’s kinaesthetics – the way their bodies move, and the particular spaces within which they do so. In ‘Smart Money is on the Skinny Bitch’ (1:3), Capheus (in Nairobi) ambushes a gang of thugs who have stolen his mother’s AIDS medicine. Physically Capheus is no match for the gang, and he is violently beaten. He appears to Sun, who is in the middle of a ring fight in Seoul, and asks for her help. A tightly choreographed action sequence follows, in which Sun fights both the men in Nairobi and claims victory in her match in Seoul. The scene thus clearly suggests that the two characters relate to one another precisely through kinaesthetic empathy, or through their ability to share in one another’s sense of movement and physicality.

⁴⁴ Beverley Skeggs and Helen Wood, *Reacting to Reality Television: Performance, Audience and Value* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2012), p. 135.

⁴⁵ See Misha Kavka, *Reality Television, Affect and Intimacy: Reality Matters* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

The scene also explicitly encourages kinaesthetic empathy from the audience. Aaron Anderson outlines the importance of kinaesthetic empathy in martial arts films, noting that the careful choreography of fight sequences invites the audience to kinaesthetically appreciate the rhythms and patterns of movement.⁴⁶ Because ‘every person who has a body...knows what it “feels” like to move a human body through space’, he argues, ‘every time a person sees another human body move, s/he implicitly understands what this movement might “feel” like.’⁴⁷ Again, this is not purely a question of mimetic comprehension – a particular gesture does not need to be within our repertoire of movement for us to understand it kinaesthetically. To some extent Anderson’s work has been the foundation of my argument throughout all chapters of my thesis; however, such a mode of relation becomes explicitly visualised in *Sense8*’s empathy sequences. Sun’s fighting style involves the whole projectional potential of her body: she twists her torso to enact high kicks (Figure 4.5), and at the end of the sequence, she reaches over her shoulder to toss her opponent to the ground. She exerts fluid control over all dimensions of both her body and the space around her, a spectacular array of limbs spinning through space (Figure 4.6).



Figure 4.5 Sun fluidly twists her body...



Figure 4.6 ...to exert control across all dimensions of space.

Anderson argues that kinaesthetic empathy is particularly heightened for spectacular forms of movement such as fight scenes (although it does also structure our appreciation of more ordinary forms of movement). ‘[A]ny time we see someone do something that we ourselves do not believe we can do or that we have not ever thought of

⁴⁶ Aaron Anderson, ‘Kinaesthesia in Martial Arts Films: Action in Motion’, *Jump Cut*, 42 (1998), 1-11.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 6.

doing or are afraid to do,' he argues, 'we may inevitably feel something – a sense of awe, perhaps, or a vicarious rush of muscular sympathy.'⁴⁸ The scene's affective power emerges directly from how it invites us to imagine what our bodies might be able to do: how it might feel to be able to kick and twirl like Sun, the empowerment of exerting tight control over all dimensions of our body's extension into space, and pleasures of enacting a skilled physical performance. Importantly, this empathetic engagement reiterates the narrative context of the scene, in which Capheus accesses a set of kinaesthetics beyond his ordinary ways of moving through the world. The wonder and thrill I feel at this scene, then, is entirely equivalent to Capheus's wonder, as he experiences the sensation of a new repertoire of movement. In this sense, the scene deliberately asks us to read it through kinaesthetic empathy in order to appreciate both Sun's fine control over her body and Capheus's experience of extending his body's limitations.

Although Sun seemingly inhabits Capheus's body here (and vice versus), this is not a question of projection or domination, in which the empathiser *becomes* the object of empathy. Rather, this sequence maintains the articulated proximity-at-a-distance of Stein's theory of empathy. Stein argues that when we empathise with another, we 'obtain a new image of the spatial world and a new zero point of orientation',⁴⁹ evoking the familiar trope of empathy as a form of perspective-taking. However, she stresses that this does not mean that we shift our own point of orientation to a new place; rather, we get a 'con-primordial' sense of orientation, in which our own primordial (or immediate) experience is accompanied by a foreign one.⁵⁰ While we at times see shots of Capheus during the fight, he is only shown during the more stationary moments, and the more spectacular movements are always visibly performed by Sun. Consequently, Sun and Capheus's experiences of their bodies in this scene still remain their own: indeed, it is the *foreignness* of Sun's kinaesthesia that is key to how Capheus understands it as novel solution to his impossible situation. Again, this particular mode of relation evokes Skeggs

⁴⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

⁴⁹ Stein, *On the Problem of Empathy*, p. 60.

⁵⁰ Ibid., p. 60.

and Wood's description of television as producing a sense of 'beside-ness', based more in accompaniment than in binaries of presence and distance or dominance and passivity.

This is furthered in 'Art is Like Religion' (1:5), in which Sun and Capheus encounter one another again as they both walk through the streets of their cities. Here, they do not so much inhabit one another's bodies as walk alongside one another, reflecting Stein's belief that the projectional qualities of kinaesthetic empathy ultimately manifest in a sense of accompaniment. When they first speak to one another, they are suspicious and surprised at their ability to understand one another, as neither can speak the other's language. After wondering 'how are we understanding each other?', Capheus's face lights up with realisation as he exclaims 'I felt your spirit in me. You are a very good fighter.' Capheus and Sun thus connect through their shared experience of fighting, a kinaesthetic understanding that allows them to comprehend one another despite their objective linguistic differences. Importantly, Capheus continues to attribute this kinaesthetic experience to Sun, recognising it as her 'spirit', and again reflecting Stein's assertion that empathy can only operate through maintaining a sense of foreignness. Like Will's grasp of the murderers in *Hannibal*, Sun and Capheus's ability to understand one another's motivations and emotional states arises from a primary experience of shared sensation, and in particular, a shared kinaesthetic sensation of movement through space. Sun and Capheus's empathetic bond is presented as a form of proximity at a distance, and in this sense can arguably be understood as distinctly televisual. The televisual qualities of this form of relating to others thus allows it to stand as a preferred reading strategy for the series – if Sun and Capheus can find a meaningful relationship with one another through kinaesthetic empathy, then so, *Sense8* seems to suggest, might we.

Serial Empathy: Relating to Television Characters

Thus far I have been exploring how *Hannibal* and *Sense8* model kinaesthetic empathy as a preferred reading strategy through the ways in which their protagonists relate to the world and to one another. Yet as well as telling us something about how we

are invited to read the programmes generally, these scenes of kinaesthetic empathy have much to offer our understanding of how we form relationships with characters specifically, particularly serial television characters. While empathy is key to how we relate to characters across all fictional narratives, all of the major theoretical paradigms for character engagement focus on the cinema or literature, and so have limited applicability to serial television. Jason Mittell notes that characters are the ‘hooks’ in television engagement, drawing us into a narrative world.⁵¹ I would add that serial television characters do not simply invite us into a programme – they *keep* us there, holding our attention over many hours of story and many, many hours of our own lives. The features of empathy I have been outlining in this chapter – ideas of accompaniment, difference, and proximity at a distance – have more applicability to the structures of serial television than to cinematic characters. In the previous chapter I explored how *Transparent* relies upon the body’s mutability through time for affective impact and political critique. In this chapter I want to further these ideas, considering how the dynamics of character kinaesthetics might act as a site for empathy, understanding, and connection. If our connections to serial television are grounded in its characters, and those characters are always bodies moving through both space and time, then kinaesthetic empathy might be key to the ways in which those connections are formed and felt.

The ability to see something of ourselves in the characters we encounter in our fictional media – to identify with them – is one of the most prevalent evaluative criteria for what makes a successful narrative. A good story has ‘realistic’ characters that are easy to understand, reflecting traits and motivations we can recognise from our own experiences. Yet much of the scholarly literature departs from the position that identification is too simple a framework to account for the variety of ways in which we relate to characters. Interestingly, the critical suspicion of identification tends to be paired

⁵¹ Jason Mittell, *Complex TV: The Poetics of Contemporary Television Storytelling* (New York: New York University Press, 2015), p. 126.

with a distrust of empathy, which can be understood as part of the long critical devaluation of questions of emotion and proximity. Noël Carroll critiques identification theory for presuming that the audience feels the same emotions as particular characters.⁵² Instead, he argues that we respond and relate more to a situation as a whole: for example, we feel anxious in a horror film regardless of whether that anxiety is mediated through a particular character. Carroll's use of terminology – 'critical prefocussing' versus 'infectious identification' – reflects the traditionally gendered bias against emotional engagement, privileging cool distance over a close and contagious connection.⁵³ Murray Smith's influential taxonomy makes a similar evaluative move, in which he argues for a 'structure of sympathy' between audiences and characters.⁵⁴ For Smith, the structure of sympathy involves 'acentral' responses that retain the distance between the audience and the character's situation. Empathy, in contrast, involves 'central' imagining, or the simulation of emotions that characters are feeling. Like Carroll, Smith privileges the more distanced form of engagement, carefully detailing his 'structure of sympathy' while relegating empathy to moments of heightened emotional contagion.

Smith and Carroll's frameworks are widely cited in discussions of identification with film characters, and undoubtedly offer more nuanced language than 'identification' alone. However, for the purposes of my own work, there are two key flaws with their approach. Firstly, neither engages with the long history of scholarship on empathy, instead presuming that empathy equates to pure mimicry. If, as I have argued in this chapter, empathy involves an articulation between self and other, between proximity and distance, then it necessarily comes into play in all forms of character identification, both affective mimicry and a more 'acentral' response. Secondly, neither model can be straightforwardly translated to television programmes, particularly serial programmes,

⁵² Noël Carroll, 'On Some Affective Relations Between Audiences and the Characters in Popular Fiction', in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 162-184.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 170.

⁵⁴ Murray Smith, *Engaging Characters: Fiction, Emotion, and the Cinema* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p. 81-6.

which necessitate specific modes of engagement that differ from that of the cinema. Most obviously, our relationship with serial television characters unfolds over and endures for a long period of time. Of course, at a time when franchises dominate box offices around the world, such long-term engagement with characters does have a role to play in the cinema. Yet this simply cannot parallel the breadth and depth of our engagement with serial television characters, who accompany us through our lives with a regularity and a frequency that cinematic franchises cannot achieve. Interestingly, Smith returns to the question of empathy in a more recent article, in which he questions how fictional narratives might be able to expand our ability to empathise.⁵⁵ While he previously suggested that empathy was less interesting than his 'structure of sympathy' in cinematic engagement, he returns to foreground it when he discusses television, specifically in relation to the particular consumption patterns of serial television. 'Empathy may be an important feature of our retrospective and anticipatory engagement with a narrative,' he suggests, 'rising up in the spaces between our occurrent engagement with it.'⁵⁶ Smith does not unpack this idea, but his discussion does seem to indicate that empathy might have particular relevance to the structures of engagement with serial television.

I believe that embodied empathy is key to our relationships with television characters, in ways that cinematic theories of identification cannot encompass. The recognition of the relationship between audiences and the bodies on our television screens is one of the oldest concepts in media studies, dating back to Horton and Wohl's work on 'parasocial relationships' in the 1950s.⁵⁷ Horton and Wohl coined the term to refer to the non-reciprocal relationships audiences form with television personalities, in which the direct address of presenters encourages feelings of friendship and camaraderie. Interestingly, in a later empirical investigation of parasocial relationships with television

⁵⁵ Murray Smith, 'Empathy, Expansionism, and the Extended Mind', in *Empathy: Philosophical and Psychological Perspectives*, ed. by Amy Coplan and Peter Goldie (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 99-117.

⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 116.

⁵⁷ Donald Horton and R. Richard Wohl, 'Mass Communication and Para-social Interaction: Observations on Intimacy at a Distance' *Psychiatry*, 19 (1956), 215-29.

figures, R. Glenn Cummins and Boni Cui found that such feelings (and associated feelings of empathy) were stronger in instances of ‘bodily address’, or when the audience saw the figure on the screen as opposed to a voiceover.⁵⁸ While much of this theory focuses on television personalities, I believe it also holds for television characters.⁵⁹ Mittell argues that serial television characters ‘come to life as we consume fiction’ and are best approached as ‘constructs of real people’, rather than simply a collection of sounds, images, and narrative properties.⁶⁰ His distinction between the aesthetic properties of audiovisual fiction – image, sound, and story – and the ‘real’, lively properties of people also evokes the body, which has always been something of a yardstick for determining the difference between reality and fiction. In this sense, it seems that the body mediates television’s characteristic tensions between reality and fiction, between presence and absence, between proximity and distance. It follows that bodily empathy – or kinaesthetic empathy – must have a role to play in how we relate to the bodies we encounter through television.

Yet most of the scholarship on television characters is largely uninterested in questions of embodiment. This is particularly the case for discussions of programmes that fit within the ‘quality television’ paradigm, which prefer to focus on our attraction to male anti-heroes (namely Walter White [Bryan Cranston] and Tony Soprano [James Gandolfini]).⁶¹ This scholarship relies either on cognitive theory, such as Vaage’s

⁵⁸ R. Glenn Cummings and Boni Cui, ‘Reconceptualising Address in Television Programming: The Effect of Address and Affective Empathy on Viewer Experience of Parasocial Interaction’, *Journal of Communication*, 64 (2014), 723–742.

⁵⁹ Horton and Wohl’s work has been extrapolated to consider how audiences relate to fictional characters: in relation to soap operas, see Elizabeth M. Perse and Rebecca B. Rubin, ‘Attribution in Social and Parasocial Relationships’, *Communication Research*, 16 (1989), 59–77; in relation to children’s television, see Cynthia Hoffner, ‘Children’s Wishful Identification and Parasocial Interaction with Favourite Television Characters’, *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, 40 (1989), 389–402; in relation to reality television, see Yan Tian and Jina H. Yoo, ‘Connecting With The Biggest Loser: An Extended Model of Parasocial Interaction and Identification in Health-Related Reality TV Shows’, *Health Communication*, 30 (2015), pp. 1–7.

⁶⁰ Mittell, *Complex TV*, p. 118.

⁶¹ See Margrethe Bruun Vaage, ‘Blinded by Familiarity: Partiality, Morality, and Engagement with TV Series’, in *Cognitive Media Theory*, ed. by Ted Nannicelli and Paul Taberham (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 268–84; and Murray Smith, ‘Just What Is It That Makes Tony Soprano Such

discussion of how ‘partiality’ operates in our relationships with characters,⁶² or narratology, such as Roberta Pearson’s taxonomy of how a television character accumulates depth over time.⁶³ Neither methodological approach accounts for the murky relationship between actor and character in television. Of course, while the boundaries between actors and characters are often blurred in other media forms, this doubled relationship tends to be strongest in television: firstly, because a television actor inhabits a character for a longer period of time; and secondly, because the paratextual presence of the actor’s (corporeal) identity is encountered alongside and interweaved with the consumption of the fictional narrative.⁶⁴ By this, I mean that our encounters with television actors in publicity and press appearances, behind-the-scenes material, and social media, heighten our awareness of their dual embodied existence as both a fictional character and a ‘real-life’ person. Pearson devotes a single line to the work of actors, which she sees as ‘a key constructor of character meaning’ but offers no further discussion of how or why this works;⁶⁵ Vaage presents a similarly scant discussion of acting, only mentioning the ‘expressivity of the actor’ in a footnote, and failing to consider how ‘partiality’ and ‘familiarity’ may involve an actor’s identity as much as that of a character. In chapter two of this thesis, I explored how performance is crucial to the construction of a kinaesthetic preferred reading strategy; considering characterisation without considering the embodied qualities of actors’ performances thus misses much of how these programmes invite themselves to be read.

In contrast, the small collection of recent work on television characters that does explore embodiment is more highly attuned to the imbrication between actor and character. In her discussion of *Star Trek: The Original Series*’s (NBC, 1966-1969) motion

an Appealing, Attractive Murderer?’, in *Ethics at the Cinema*, ed. by Ward E. Jones and Samantha Vice (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), pp. 66-90.

⁶² Vaage, ‘Blinded by Familiarity’.

⁶³ Roberta Pearson, ‘Anatomising Gilbert Grissom: The Structure and Function of the Televisual Character’, in *Reading CSI: Crime TV Under the Microscope*, ed. by Michael Allen (London: I.B. Tauris), pp. 39-56.

⁶⁴ Jason Mittell, *Complex TV*, p. 148.

⁶⁵ Pearson, ‘Anatomising Gilbert Grissom’, p. 44.

picture adaptations, Ina Rae Hark asserts that the appeal of serial television lies in its ‘continuing characters’, and that these cannot be separated from the bodies of actors.⁶⁶ She explores the high level of self-reflexivity about the ageing bodies of the original *Star Trek* cast in their cinematic outings, suggesting that while television audiences are perfectly willing to accept the fact that bodies age and change and grow, in the cinema this becomes a sticking point for engagement and must be explicitly addressed. Ross Garner extends Hart’s argument, exploring how the ‘embodied presence’ of an actor creates a sense of ‘co-temporality’ between the bodies on screen and the bodies of the audience.⁶⁷ He argues that this provides audiences with a sense of ‘ontological security’, helping them negotiate their own ‘continual sense of self.’⁶⁸ Garner’s suggestion that audiences use the embodied presence of television characters to make sense of their own lives implies a degree of embodied empathy, and resonates with my discussion of *Transparent*’s changing bodies in the previous chapter. Like parasociality, then, the co-temporality we experience with our serial television characters seems to be grounded in the connection to the character as a *body*.

In order to explore our kinaesthetic connections to characters, I will discuss an example that I believe stands as the exception that proves the rule – the phenomenon of recasting, in which a departing actor is replaced and a character persists in a different body. This is a common technique in long-running television programmes such as soap operas, for it ensures that the long and complex histories of characters do not have to be sacrificed when an actor decides to move on. In between the first and second seasons of *Sense8*, the actor who played Capheus, Aml Ameen, left the production and was replaced by Toby Onwumere, who debuted in the Christmas special ‘Happy Fucking New Year’ (2:1). Onwumere’s introduction was extremely self-reflexive: Capheus and his friend Jela

⁶⁶ Ina Rae Hark, ‘The Wrath of the Original Cast: Translating Embodied Television Characters to other Media’, in *Adaptations: From Text to Screen, Screen to Text*, edited by Deborah Cartmell and Imelda Whelehan (Abingdon: Routledge, 1999), pp. 172-83 (p. 172).

⁶⁷ Ross Garner, ‘Remembering Sarah Jane: Intradiegetic Allusions, Embodied Presence/Absence and Nostalgia’, in *New Dimensions of Doctor Who: Adventures in Space, Time and Television*, ed. by David Mellor, Matt Hills and Benjamin Earls (London: I. B. Tauris, 2013), pp. 192-215.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 205.

(Paul Ogola) discuss the importance of faces while repainting Jean-Claude Van Damme's face on their van (the Van Damme). 'People care about that shit', Jela claims. 'Face is important.' During this conversation Onwumere is shot in silhouette, deliberately obscuring his face from the audience. The scene thus deliberately acknowledges our connection to the bodies of performers, exploiting our anticipation surrounding Capheus's embodied change. In his discussion of recasting in soap operas, Jeremy Butler suggests that recasting acts as a 'source of spectator pleasure...based on the foregrounding of actors *performing* characters'.⁶⁹ *Sense8* similarly uses Capheus's embodied transformation as a source of pleasure for the audience, explicitly asking us to read the scene's self-reflexive tone through our embodied connection to, or kinaesthetic empathy with, performers.⁷⁰

Critical reviews of the recasting were somewhat mixed. *The A.V. Club*'s Rowan Kaiser states that Onwumere has 'a different energy than the previous actor, Aml Ameen, whose boyish charm seems to have been replaced by someone a little more withdrawn and composed';⁷¹ and *The Mary Sue*'s Teresa Jusino suggests that Capheus 'feels more jaded than the character should be', missing the 'earnest sweetness' of Ameen's demeanour.⁷² These reviewers are correct – there *is* something that feels different about Capheus in the Christmas episode, something that goes beyond simply his new face. However, I believe that the episode deliberately exploits this sense of dissonance for narrative purposes, relying upon this kinaesthetic reading of Capheus's corporeal energy

⁶⁹ Jeremy Butler, "'I'm Not a Doctor But I Play One on TV': Characters, Actors, and Acting in Television Soap Opera', *Cinema Journal*, 30 (1991), 75-91 (p. 82).

⁷⁰ Of course, much of the self-reflexivity of this scene can be read as a deliberate jab at departing actor Aml Ameen. While the official reason for Ameen's exit was a rather vague 'creative differences', it is likely that there was conflict between the actor and director Lana Wachowski. See Nellie Andreeva and Mike Fleming Jr., 'Sense8: Aml Ameen Replaced By Toby Onwumere in Wachowskis' Netflix Series', *Deadline*, 26 April 2016. <<http://deadline.com/2016/04/sense8-aml-ameen-toby-onwumere-recasting-wachowski-netflix-series-1201744886/>>

⁷¹ Rowan Kaiser, 'Sense8's Christmas Special is the Most Sense8 to Ever Sense8', *The A.V. Club*, 23 December 2016. <<http://www.avclub.com/tvclub/sense8s-christmas-special-most-sense8-ever-sense8-247727>>

⁷² Teresa Jusino, 'Review: Sense8: A Christmas Special Brings Together Our Favourite Sensates In Less-Than-Spectacular Fashion', *The Mary Sue*, 25 December 2016. <<http://www.themarysue.com/review-sense8-christmas-special/>>

for storytelling impact. Capheus's main storyline in the episode revolves around his relationship with his friend Jela, who questions the martial arts skills he has suddenly developed (through his relationship with Sun, as outlined earlier in this chapter). 'I've know you since you were ten years old', he says, 'and one thing you are not, Mr Van Damme, is a genius of martial arts.' In pairing Jela's concern and confusion over Capheus's kinaesthetic transformation with the similar transformation of the actor, the episode manages this potential confusion by making it key to the meaning of the narrative. In other words, we are invited to read Jela's response to Capheus's new skills through our own changing relationship with Capheus's body. Capheus's recasting thus attests to my argument that our relationships with television characters are based in kinaesthetic empathy, revolving around our embodied connections to performers and our responses to the kinaesthetic qualities of performance.

The proxemics of character

Our relationship to Capheus's embodied identity is mediated through the relationship between Jela and Capheus, which suggests that focusing on the connections *between* bodies might be crucial for theorising television characters. Indeed, in Butler's discussion of soap opera recasting, he argues that recasting works because soap operas take shape through the '*relationships* among the characters...[rather than] the characters individually'.⁷³ Similarly, Greg M. Smith believes that 'the primetime serial asks us to stage a series of comparisons among its characters', meaning that our ideas about any single character cannot be separated from how we understand the other members of the ensemble.⁷⁴ Yet most of the established scholarship on character identification continues to focus on how we relate to a single character as a bounded entity. This of course fails to account for the specificities of serial storytelling, in which the dynamic and changing relationships between characters provide much of the narrative conflict and interest. If, as

⁷³ Butler, 'I'm Not a Doctor But I Play One on TV', p. 153.

⁷⁴ Greg M. Smith, *Beautiful TV: The Art and Argument of Ally McBeal* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2007), p. 77.

I explored in the previous chapter, the very nature of serial identity is being part of a larger collective (or what Iris Marion Young terms the ‘collective otherness of serialised existence’⁷⁵) then serial television characters must be understood and encountered through their relationships as much as their individual traits and quirks.

In chapter two of this thesis, I argued that kinaesthetic reading strategies interact with the idea of proxemics, or how relationships between bodies are mediated through ideas of public, private, and interpersonal space. I have furthered this idea elsewhere in my work on acting in *Orphan Black* (BBC America, 2013-2017),⁷⁶ in which I argue that the labour of any individual actor must be recognised as a product of their proxemic relationships with their fellow actors, regardless of whether those relationships are visible in the final product. In what follows, I explore how such proxemic relationships are also crucial to character development. Serial television narratives tend to use ensemble casts,⁷⁷ meaning that characters take shape through the ways in which they relate to one another. The relationship between a character and a collective is arguably a proxemic one, communicated through the kinaesthetic dynamics between the bodies of the characters as they occupy space and move around one another. The ways in which we are invited to read and empathise with our television characters, then, might be based in their kinaesthetic interactions with one another as much as their individual actions.

Sense8 very clearly bases its character development in the connections and interactions between its protagonists. Much of the early promotional material for the programme revolved around the individual characters. One week before the series premiered, Netflix released a series of short character trailers. Each trailer was approximately one minute in length, and gave a quick introduction to the character, their location, and their storyline. Sun’s trailer establishes her fighting prowess, the discovery

⁷⁵ Iris Marion Young, ‘Gender as Seriality: Thinking About Women as a Social Collective’, *Signs*, 19 (1994), 713-38 (p. 726).

⁷⁶ Zoë Shacklock, ‘Two of a Kind: Revaluing the Work of Acting Doubles in *Orphan Black*’, *Journal of Film and Video*, 69 (2016), 69-82.

⁷⁷ An ensemble cast facilitates a degree of flexibility and variation across long-running serial narratives: different episodes can focus on different characters, and the departure of actors is less disruptive to the overall narrative.

of the embezzlement in her company, and hints at her decision to incarcerate herself for her family's sake.⁷⁸ Nomi's trailer revolves around her trans identity, and introduces the forced hospitalisation that defines her storyline in the first half of the season.⁷⁹ Each trailer ends with the character connecting with at least one another Sensate (Nomi sees Will in the corridor of the hospital, and Sun sees Nomi in her office) over which we hear Jonas delivering the series tagline: 'you are no longer just you'. While acknowledging the attraction (and marketability) of individual characters, the trailers conclude by emphasising the intersubjective relationships between them, suggesting that the arcs of the characters will culminate in their increasing interconnection with one another. As I have been arguing throughout this thesis, paratexts often explicitly set up the preferred reading strategies for the programmes they surround. Here, the emphasis on intersubjectivity in the character promotions invites us to read the characters through their collective identities, identities that emerge from the proxemic connections between the characters as bodies in space.

To some extent, exploiting the connections (and missed connections) between bodies is a common storytelling trope across many ensemble dramas – multiple protagonist films often and obviously play with the audience's desire to see story lines intersect, as do television programmes with characters in multiple and discrete locations, such as *Lost*, *Game of Thrones*, *Heroes* (NBC, 2006-2010), and *The 100* (The CW, 2014–). However, what makes *Sense8* particularly interesting is the way it foregrounds the kinaesthetic pleasures of these intersections, and how kinaesthetic empathy becomes the catalyst for the formation of group dynamics. The final episode of the season, 'I Can't Leave Her' (1:12), contains a remarkable set piece in which each of the Sensates contributes a unique ability to help Will break Riley out of hospital in Iceland. Nomi helps Will gain access to the facility by hacking his phone; Lito flirts with another doctor

⁷⁸ Netflix, 'Sense8 | Character Trailer: Sun [HD] | Netflix', YouTube, 28 May 2015.
 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdzHQe4gUMw>>

⁷⁹ Netflix, 'Sense8 | Character Trailer: Nomi [HD] | Netflix', YouTube, 28 May 2015.
 <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IfuD34GO9pc>>

to discover where in the building Riley is being held; Sun fights the guards in the corridors; Kala puts together a drug cocktail to wake Riley from her induced coma; Capheus hotwires their escape ride; and Wolfgang recklessly engages in a standoff with a helicopter. In each case, each member of the cluster steps in when Will expresses doubt or confusion: when he exclaims ‘shit, four guards!’, Sun calmly responds ‘is that all?; when he tells Nomi he doesn’t know how to wake her up, Kala says ‘I do’; and when he panics because there are no keys in the ambulance, Capheus laughs ‘this is not a problem.’ However, these skills are not simply forms of knowledge communicated to Will, but forms of muscle memory that Will must access (and then repeat) kinaesthetically: Kala, for example, does not simply pull out a few bottles, but roams up and down the shelves while pointing at each bottle to identify it, turning a fairly cerebral exercise into a kinaesthetic form of knowledge (Figures 4.7-4.8). Robert C. Allen argues that soap opera

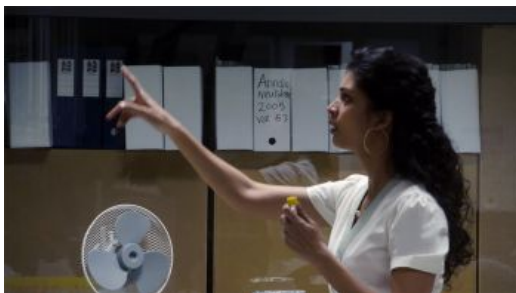


Figure 4.7 Kala expresses her pharmaceutical knowledge through her moving body.



Figure 4.8 Will accesses Kala's knowledge kinaesthetically.

viewers derive more pleasure from watching the ‘ripple effects’ of events across a community;⁸⁰ in *Sense8*, these ripples are manifested kinaesthetically, as the events of the finale ripple across and take shape through the kinaesthetic repertoires of the characters.

The final scene of the season satisfies the audience’s desire to see all eight of the Sensates within the same screen space. As Riley and Will drift out to sea on a boat in the Reykjavik harbour, the scene cuts from close shots of the two of them to a wide shot to reveal the other six Sensates sitting on the boat alongside them. The cut occurs at the moment when the soft piano of Sigur Ros’s ‘Sæglópur’ swells to a crescendo,

⁸⁰ Robert C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985), p. 57.

accompanied by strings and a drum track. This mirrors and amplifies the fact that the cut is also the emotional crescendo of the entire season. In contrast to the spectacular set piece earlier in the episode, this is a very simple and ordinary moment of kinaesthetic empathy, in which the characters sit beside one another in a display of care and solidarity (Figure 4.9). I always find this

scene extremely powerful and emotionally resonating, which I believe stems from how it explicitly visualises a structure of kinaesthetic

empathy. It is worth returning to D'Aloia's



Figure 4.9 The Sensates sit beside one another in the final shot of the season.

discussion of empathy as a form of mediated accompaniment, in which he states that 'the empathising subject is side-by-side with the empathised subjects, and their adjacent position implies a paradoxical proximity at a distance.'⁸¹ D'Aloia could be describing the final scene of *Sense8*, in which adjacent bodies exist in a mediated relationship of intense proximity despite being geographically dispersed across the world.

Yet he could also be describing the *other* empathising body present in the scene – that of the audience, who have also sat beside the characters over the course of the season, connected to the screen in the quintessentially televisual structure of proximity at a distance. If, as Skeggs and Wood claim, 'television can produce a "beside-ness", a binding to others',⁸² then the final moment of *Sense8* is so resonant and powerful because it materialises that 'beside-ness' in the proxemic dynamics of the scene. While the shared kinaesthetics of the hospital escape are thrilling and spectacular, the final scene's impact relies heavily on the same sorts of 'relatable kinaesthetics' that I explored in relation to Arya Stark earlier in this thesis. Sitting beside others in a structure of care and support is

⁸¹ D'Aloia, 'Cinematic Empathy', p. 94.

⁸² Skeggs and Wood, *Reacting to Reality Television*, p. 135.

instantly relatable to the audience, intimate and familiar. In chapter two of this thesis, I outlined Jason Mittell's argument that the final episodes of serial television programmes often involve a degree of metafictional reflection on their own narrational and reading strategies. The finale of *Sense8*'s first season thus ends with a moment of metafictional reflection on how kinaesthetic empathy structures both the relationship between the characters *and* our relationship to them, again attesting to its centrality in the reading strategies of the series.

In a similar way, *Hannibal*'s season finales also reflect upon the proxemic connections between its characters. Yet where *Sense8* is concerned with a large ensemble, *Hannibal*'s proxemic emphasis lies with its two main protagonists, Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter. Over the course of its three seasons *Hannibal* plays with the relationship between Will and Hannibal, presenting it as a case of developing (and dangerous) intersubjectivity. Each of the season finales of *Hannibal* invests much of its affective power and meaning in the kinaesthetic articulations between Will and Hannibal's bodies. In 'Savoureux' (1:13), Hannibal visits Will in prison in a scene that directly references *The Silence of the Lambs*; in 'Mizumono' (2:13), Hannibal stabs Will in the stomach then pulls him into an embrace; and in 'The Wrath of the Lamb' (3:13), Will embraces Hannibal before pushing them both off the top of a cliff. In my second chapter I explored the embodied logic of the cliffhanger, in which I argued that serial television's cliffhangers exploit the kinaesthetic affect of halted action. Yet in *Hannibal*'s cliffhangers, it is not so much the action that is halted as the *interactions* between Will and Hannibal; placed on either side of a cell door, on either side of (possibly) life and death, and finally together but both on the wrong side of the cliff top. Consequently, the gap of serial fiction – what Sean O'Sullivan terms the 'animating energy' of serial narratives⁸³ – becomes articulated through the gap between Hannibal and Will's bodies. Like *Sense8*'s finale, this encourages us to reflect upon the narrational and reading strategies of the programme more

⁸³ Sean O'Sullivan, 'Serials and Satisfaction', *Romanticism and Victorianism on the Net*, 63 (2013), para 14. <<http://www.erudit.org/en/journals/ravon/2013-n63-ravon01450/1025614ar/>>

generally, considering how Will and Hannibal's interconnected character arcs are expressed through the proxemic relationships between their bodies. If the vast narrative uses arrested movement to encourage narrative speculation, *Hannibal*'s cliffhangers encourage empathy, more interested in using the frozen spaces between characters' embodied presence to maintain interest throughout the gaps between episodes. In this sense, it is perhaps fitting that the series finale concludes this embodied narrative logic by finally allowing Will and Hannibal to finally physically connect in an eternal embrace into death.

Blurring Boundaries: The Hopes and Horrors of Kinaesthetic Empathy

In structuring the ways in which we relate to one another, kinaesthetic empathy not only seems to support existing communities, but also holds the promise of creating new forms of relation and new forms of community structure. Susan Leigh Foster believes that empathy works by 'creating a distinction between "I" and "you," while also bringing into existence a "we"',⁸⁴ suggesting that empathy (particularly the articulated self-other relationship crucial to kinaesthetic empathy) has the power to create new forms of (collective) subjectivity. Erin Manning identifies a similar promise in kinaesthesia, arguing that 'sensing body in movement will always circumvent a project that attempts to characterise it in the name of touch, the senses, gender, race, politics'.⁸⁵ Here, Manning suggests that kinaesthesia unsettles and resists dominant categorisation, linking corporeal mobility with a bigger sense of political and ideological change. If both empathy and kinaesthesia seem to contain an innate promise of change, then kinaesthetic empathy must be understood as productive and transformative, much like the serialised narratives of identity politics I discussed in the previous chapter. Of course, empathy has long been understood as a positive social force, framed through what is commonly known as the 'empathy-altruism hypothesis'. First outlined in the work of C. Daniel Batson, this

⁸⁴ Foster, *Choreographing Empathy*, p. 164

⁸⁵ Erin Manning, *Politics of Touch: Sense, Movement, Sovereignty* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007), p. xvi.

hypothesis states that the ability to empathise with another person leads us to act compassionately and selflessly.⁸⁶ Consequently, empathy becomes the means through which to create a more ethical society. The empathy-altruism hypothesis is not restricted to our interaction with our neighbours and friends, but also operates through the relationships we form with fictional people in fictional worlds. There is a long history of scholarship that links reading novels with the development of empathy, in which the expansive worlds on the page inspire an expansive worldview.⁸⁷ The road to a kinder, more caring society, then, seems to be paved not just with empathy but with *narrative empathy* in particular. Reading serial television through kinaesthetic empathy, then, may encourage us to imagine and create new (and potentially more progressive) kinds of intersubjective relationships.

Yet of course, making a claim for kinaesthetic empathy as the key to social improvement raises a number of questions that need to be carefully unpacked. In the previous chapter I argued that kinaesthesia works both to reiterate and to resist various norms of identity, and kinaesthetic empathy is no different: while it contributes to the formation of social bonds, but this is not to say that these bonds are inherently more progressive, or that this construction is without violence. The hegemony of the empathy-altruism hypothesis does make it somewhat difficult to criticise – who would want to argue against an affect that promotes feelings of care and solidarity? However, it is precisely the seemingly unproblematic virtue of empathy that makes it all the more insidious; as Meghan Hammond and Sue Kim warn, empathy and sympathy are ‘politically dangerous precisely because they appear to be ethically good.’⁸⁸ Broad ideas of

⁸⁶ C. Daniel Baston, *The Altruism Question: Toward a Social-Psychological Answer* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1991).

⁸⁷ See Martha Nussbaum’s work on how the ‘literary imagination’ promotes more ethical modes of relation, in ‘The Literary Imagination in Public Life’, *New Literary History*, 22 (1991), 877–910; and Steven Pinker’s belief that reading is a ‘technology for perspective-taking’, in *The Better Angels of Our Nature: The Decline of Violence in History and its Causes* (London: Allen Lane, 2011), p. 175.

⁸⁸ Meghan Marie Hammond and Sue J. Kim, ‘Introduction’, in *Rethinking Empathy through Literature*, ed. by Meghan Marie Hammond and Sue J. Kim (New York: Routledge, 2014), pp. 1–18 (p. 9).

‘empathy’, ‘humanity’, and ‘compassion’ obscure the specific material conditions and uneven power dynamics that operate within these affective regimes. More simply, the ability to empathise with others is entirely implicated in hierarchal power dynamics: the West versus the rest, the rich versus the poor, the healthy versus the ill, and the superior versus the marginalised. Kinaesthetic empathy is by no means immune from this issue; rather, as I explored in the previous chapter, the tendency to connect kinaesthesia with a universal body makes it particularly susceptible to participating in normative discourses. Kinaesthetic empathy with fictional worlds may expand our horizons, but those horizons still exist, and some bodies remain on the wrong side. In what follows, I seek to explore how *Hannibal* and *Sense8* use their reading strategies of kinaesthetic empathy to push the boundaries of intersubjective relations, in ways both hopeful and horrific, both violent and transformative, both reiterative of and resistant to normative ideas.

Earlier in this chapter I argued that *Hannibal* invests much of its narrative and affective impact in the proxemic relationship between Will and Hannibal. Yet as well as producing much of the dramatic stakes, the kinaesthetic dynamics between the two characters also created a devoted slash following, invested in the potential for a queer relationship between the two men. Put simply, ‘slashing’ involves reading homoerotic (predominantly male-male) subtext in a text that does not explicitly acknowledge it. While a full discussion of the history and the meaning of slash fandom is beyond the scope of this thesis, I want to suggest that much slash derives intense pleasure from kinaesthetic affect. Throughout this thesis, I have been arguing that kinaesthetic affect involves the anticipation of movement as much as the enactment of movement. Slash fandom similarly revolves around the anticipation and imagination of particular kinds of movement and proxemic dynamics, without necessarily seeing (or needing to see) those kinaesthetics actualised. The ‘Hannigram’ slash fandom (as it came to be known) was particularly excited by a scene in Hannibal’s office from ‘Buffet Froid’ (1:10), in which Hannibal walks towards Will, who is leaning against the ladder to upper level of the room. As Hannibal approaches, Will leans his head back and raises his shoulders, baring

his throat and directing his chest towards Hannibal, who raises his own chin in response (Figure 4.10). Endless analysis of the body language in the scene ensued across social media networks such as Tumblr and Twitter, in which fans speculated intensely about whether Will's movement was submissive or a flight response, whether



Figure 4.10 Queer desire emerges from the proxemic dynamics between Hannibal and Will.

Hannibal's movement was possessive or appreciative, and how their proxemic dynamics in this moment might translate into other aspects of their relationship.⁸⁹ Here, the erotic charge between the two characters in the scene emerges precisely through the audience's ability to empathise with the characters' kinaesthetic dynamics: in other words, reading the scene through kinaesthetic empathy produces a transformative queer reading.

In an article on the Hannibal-Will relationship for *The Daily Dot*, Aja Romano raises some of the issues surrounding the slash pairing: whether the toxic nature of their relationship pathologises gay relationships, and whether the show engages in 'queerbaiting' (in which producers tease fans with homoerotic subtext without any hope that these proxemic dynamics will be materialised more explicitly).

[I]t becomes difficult to read dynamics like Hannigram without falling into rigid binary interpretations: either the characters lock lips onscreen, becoming sexualised in a way that unequivocally leaves no room for

⁸⁹ For an example of this discussion, see the threaded discussion here <<http://bonearenaofmyskull.tumblr.com/post/63956487598/awillsgrahamcracker-hushthenoise-theres-meta>> In the tags, the author notes that the scene was so popular because 'fandoms condition themselves to take the scraps because that's all they ever get most of the time', reflecting the way that slash fandom is invested in reading into small kinaesthetic moments.

interpretation, or that relationship is considered a platonic relationship between straight people whose homoerotic interest is “subtextual.”⁹⁰

In this sense, although kinaesthetic empathy may produce this transformative relationship, it also reiterates particular normative ideas about queerness: it remains something that can only ever be implicit or imagined, for it becomes dangerous and pathological when materialised through the body. However, keeping this caveat in mind, I still want to consider the interesting relationship between queerness, kinaesthesia, and empathy at work here. In the previous chapter I proposed the idea of ‘queer kinaesthesia’, considering how Maura’s experience of movement is key to how she understands her queer embodiment and queer desire. While *Hannibal* may encourage us to read its queer potential through kinaesthetic empathy in a way that does reiterate ideas of what is normatively acceptable – what can be explicitly depicted and what must be empathetically imagined – I believe that this still produces something that has the potential for transformation. Indeed, Romano goes on to speculate about the ‘possibility of more nuanced queer readings’ of *Hannibal*, in which Hannibal and Will’s relationship may be read as queer without forcing it into binary paradigms or ideas of strict sexual categories. To quote *Hannibal*’s Frederick Chilton (Raúl Esparza), if ‘[t]here is not yet a name for whatever Will Graham is’, then there might not necessarily be a label for what Will and Hannibal are to one another and to the audience. Kinaesthesia – both queer kinaesthesia specifically and kinaesthetic empathy more generally – might begin to allow us to approach this relationship in all its ambivalence. By this, I mean questioning not whether their relationship *is* queer, but why we might be predisposed to read it as such, and what this tells us about how we interpret desire, identity, and relationships on television.

Interestingly, this notion of queer kinaesthesia is something that links *Hannibal* and *Sense8*. Both programmes use the intersubjective potential of kinaesthetic empathy

⁹⁰ Aja Romano, “‘Hannibal’ is Subverting Everything We Know About Male Relationships”, *The Daily Dot*, 27 August 2015. <<http://www.dailydot.com/parsec/hannibal-series-finale-hannigram-queer-subtext/>>

to tell stories about how people relate to one another through the messy lines of corporeality, and to challenge and engage with normative ideas of intimacy and interpersonal connection. While *Hannibal*'s engagement with queer desire is more subtextual, *Sense8* is very explicitly concerned with how kinaesthetic empathy might produce new ways of being and relating to bodies that can be understood as queer. Earlier in this chapter I argued that *Sense8* rarely brings all eight of its Sensates together, preferring to have them interact in pairs. However, a notable exception to this rule can be found in the sex sequences, or what critics refer to as the 'orgy' scenes. In these scenes, the Sensates share and experience kinaesthetic empathy during sex. The first group sex sequence occurs in 'Demons' (1:6), and involves four of the eight sensates – Nomi (and her partner Amanita [Freema Agyeman]), Lito (and his partner Hernando [Alfonso Herrera]), and then Will and Wolfgang, who have thus far been presented as straight. The scene begins with Lito and Will lifting weights in their respective countries. Exercise is, of course, an experience that relies heavily on kinaesthesia. In this sense, much like how *Transparent* uses Maura's dancing as the gateway for her acceptance of her queer identity, a deliberate attention to body movement here becomes the catalyst for entering into queer forms of desire and attachment. In a discussion of *Sense8*'s queer politics for *BitchMedia*, Sreshtha Sen suggests that the sex scenes 'represent queerness for me...they embrace [the] fluidity intrinsic to my queer utopia.'⁹¹ I would argue that such fluidity is made accessible to the audience precisely through kinaesthetic empathy. Aesthetically, the scene is shot to draw our attention to the rhythms of body movement across different experiences, pairing the sexual with the non-sexual – the back and forth motion of Will's sit-ups resounds with that of Lito's hips, and the gentle stroking of Nomi's hands creates the same curved lines as Wolfgang's languid posture.

⁹¹ Sreshtha Sen, 'Sense8's Christmas Episode Puts Queer Happiness on the Table for 2017', *BitchMedia*, 6 January 2017. <<http://www.bitchmedia.org/article/sense8-puts-queer-happiness-table-2017>>

In a similar way, the second orgy scene in 'Happy Fucking New Year' (2:1) also invites the audience to attend to the fluidity of bodies and desire. This scene involves all eight of the Sensates, and again foregrounds the rhythms of body movement: it focuses on close-up shots of muscles contracting in backs and bottoms, heads twisting and turning to press against skin, and hands stroking and clutching (Figures 4.11-4.13). In a somewhat forgotten article about the kinaesthetic experience of watching sports, Judith Butler suggests that 'only from a spectatorial point of view does the body appear as a bounded kind of thing, and when that point of view is relinquished in favour of engaged bodily action, we are less likely to know precisely where our bodily boundaries begin and end.'⁹² Butler could, I think, be describing the kind of kinaesthetic empathy through which the Sensates connect to one another here. The scene deliberately frustrates the discrete lines of individual bodies and the bounded forms of recognisable desire. Instead, the focus on the kinaesthetic rhythms of bodily action creates a sense of fluidity, in which individual bodies are less important than the overall sense of rhythm and motion. By connecting to one another through kinaesthetic empathy, the Sensates gain access to a transformative sense of queerness, which challenges our ideas of what bodies should do and how they should relate with one

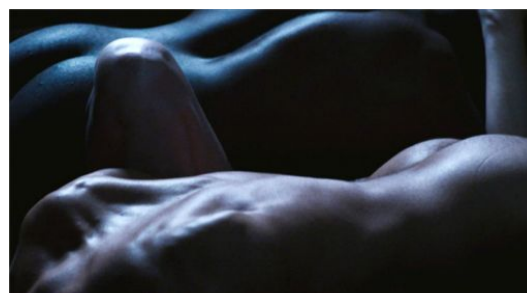


Figure 4.11 The sex scene emphasises the rippling contractions of muscles...

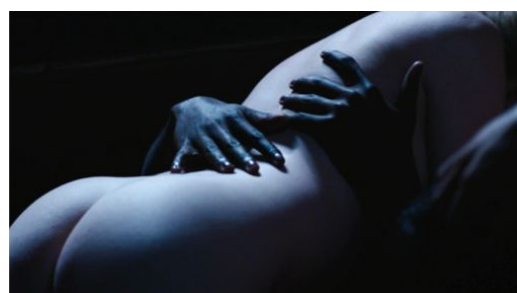


Figure 4.12 ...the movement of hands against skin...

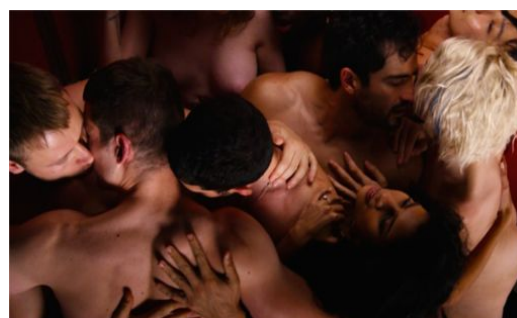


Figure 4.13 ...and the fluidity of multiple bodies moving as one.

⁹² Judith Butler, 'Athletic Genders: Hyperbolic Instance and/or the Overcoming of Sexual Binarism', *Stanford Humanities Review*, 6 (1995), para 8. <<https://web.stanford.edu/group/SHR/6-2/html/butler.html>>

another. Reviewing the episode for *IndieWire*, Liz Shannon Miller states that rather than being presented simply as erotic spectacle, the group sex scenes reflect the narrative's 'deeply held ethos that love, in whatever shape or form it might come in, is something to be honoured and cherished.'⁹³ Again, *Sense8* capitalises on the productive promise of kinaesthetic empathy, inviting us to approach its group sex scenes through this reading strategy in order to queer our understandings of relationships and intimacy. Moira Gatens suggests that we tend to take on the gestures and movements of bodies we love,⁹⁴ and thus it is perhaps unsurprising that Will and Hannibal's kinaesthetic mirroring has been widely interpreted as a love story, or that *Sense8* so explicitly combines the kinaesthetic empathy of the *Sensates* with queer desire. Reading these programmes with kinaesthetic empathy, then, seems to invite us to imagine a mode of intersubjectivity based within queer desire, and, in the case of *Sense8*, explicit queer pleasure.

Kinaesthetic kinship

In envisaging different ways in which bodies might relate to one another, both *Sense8* and *Hannibal* are also interested in found family structures, or kinship ties based on connections other than biological (and heterosexual) reproduction. In her work on queer forms of kinship, Elizabeth Freeman argues that kinship is 'resolutely corporeal...oriented around the body's limitations and possibilities', and proposes a new understanding of a 'kinetic kinship' based on shared action rather than genetic heritage. While she fails to draw the connection, her call to reconfigure kinship as both innately corporeal and as set of 'acts' clearly invites a kinaesthetic interpretation, and might have particular relevance to the kinaesthetic reading strategies of the programmes I am concerned with in this thesis. Serial television has always had a propensity for telling stories about kinship, for it tends to be concerned with the family dynamics and community structures of its

⁹³ Liz Shannon Miller, "Sense8: A Christmas Special" Review: A Loving Orgy For The Holidays', *IndieWire*, 24 December 2016. <<http://www.indiewire.com/2016/12/sense8-christmas-special-review-season-2-netflix-lana-wachowski-1201762599/>>

⁹⁴ Moira Gatens, *Imaginary Bodies: Ethics, Power and Corporeality* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 31.

ensemble casts.⁹⁵ Sofia Bull, in her work on how contemporary television uses scientific and genetic imagery, argues that *CSI* uses elements of its characteristic visual iconography (such as blood and family trees) in order to explore and materialise ideas of kinship, particularly kinship as genetic and genealogical. Following Bull, I would argue that *Sense8* and *Hannibal* also use their particular reading strategies as a way to explore kinship; yet here, this is a form of kinship and community based in kinaesthetic empathy and connection, rather than more traditional ideas of biological genealogy. In what follows, I consider how *Hannibal* and *Sense8* might ask us to reflect upon the 'kin' in 'kinaesthetics', using the intersubjectivity of kinaesthetic empathy in order to push against normative understandings of what community and family relationships should look like.

Hannibal explicitly constructs a 'found family' structure between Will, Hannibal, and Abigail Hobbs (Kacey Rohl), which the narrative explicitly references on multiple occasions.⁹⁶ In 'Œuf' (1:4), Will and Hannibal admit that they are both 'feeling paternal' towards Abigail. During one of their therapy sessions, Will tells Hannibal that 'there's something so foreign about family, like an ill-fitting suit.' Here, Will defensively tries to avoid admitting that he feels a powerful bond of kinship developing between himself, Hannibal, and Abigail. However, his choice of metaphor tells us something about his kinaesthetic experience, suggesting that feelings of family involve some kind of 'fit' to the body. Indeed, Will, Hannibal and Abigail's family structure is clearly a 'kinetic' kinship, based in their shared participation in a particular set of actions, namely murder and cannibalism. In the previous episode, 'Potage' (1:3), both Hannibal and Will re-enact scenes from Abigail's life, identifying themselves as paternal figures by kinaesthetically approximating Garrett Jacob Hobbs (Vladimir John Cubrt). Hannibal murders Abigail's friend Marissa Schurr (Holly Deveaux), impaling her body on stag antlers in the same

⁹⁵ For a discussion of kinship in television studies, see Sofia Bull, 'Tracing Bloodlines: Kinship and Reproduction Under Investigation in *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation*', *Journal of Popular Television*, 2 (2014), 117-137.

⁹⁶ In 'Trou Normand' (1:9), Hannibal tells Will that 'we're her fathers now'; in '...And the Woman Clothed with the Sun' (3:9), he remarks 'Is there a child in your life, Will? I gave you a chance, if you recall.'

manner as Hobbs (even though we do not see this action, we understand that it was Hannibal's work). Will has a vivid dream in which he slits Abigail's throat in the exact same manner as her father. Both of these acts can be read as moments of kinaesthetic empathy, in which Hannibal and Will work through their relationship with Abigail by imagining what it might feel like to embody her father. At the end of the episode, Abigail also participates in this particular action set, gutting Nicholas Boyle with a hunting knife. This action brings her closer to Hannibal, who helps her hide the body, and thus ensures that she is placed in a position of dependency to him. The familial feelings between the characters emerge and are articulated through a particular set of kinaesthetics: grasping knives and slicing skin. *Hannibal* thus invites us to read and recognise kinship as predominantly kinaesthetic. Yet importantly, this family structure is produced entirely through Hannibal's manipulation and violence, again suggesting that while kinaesthetic empathy may be productive, this does not necessarily mean that this production is without violence.

Sense8 is also obviously concerned with the idea of kinaesthetic communities and kinship, reiterating its interest in queering our normative ideas of how we relate to one another. 'What is Human?' (1:10), contains a scene that very deliberately critiques and reimagines the idea of kinship. As Riley sits in an auditorium and watches her father play piano in the symphony orchestra, she (and subsequently each of the Sensates) flashes back to the moment of their birth. The Wachowskis state that they filmed live births for this sequence,⁹⁷ and it is unflinchingly graphic and unsurprisingly affecting, both emotionally and bodily. In my review of literature I outlined Linda Williams's work on 'body genres', in which the body of the spectator is 'caught up in an almost involuntary mimicry of the emotion or sensation of the body on the screen'.⁹⁸ Body genres, I would argue, are texts that invite very extreme and obvious forms of kinaesthetic empathy. She

⁹⁷ Meredith Woerner, 'The Wachowskis Say They Filmed A Live Birth For Their TV Show *Sense8*', *iO9*, 2 February 2015. <<http://io9.gizmodo.com/the-wachowskis-say-they-filmed-a-live-birth-for-their-t-1683307179>>

⁹⁸ Linda Williams, 'Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess', *Film Quarterly*, 44 (1991), 2-13 (p. 4).

isolates three particular genres as exemplars of the form – melodrama, horror, and pornography. I believe that birth scenes are perhaps the epitome of the body genre, falling at the intersection of each of Williams' three genres: they share horror's physical excess and corporeal trauma, melodrama's 'weeping woman', and the excessive visibility of pornography's 'money shot' that attests to its status as 'real' and as 'truth'.

Lori Shorr criticises birth scenes for cutting between static close ups of face and vagina, participating in the long trend in which '[f]emale bodies in motion...are constantly stopped through filmic dismemberment' in order to preserve visual pleasure.⁹⁹ The birth sequence in *Sense8* uses a mobile camera that moves between face and vagina, establishing a kinaesthetic continuity between facial expression and physical exertion. Yet the use of montage ensures that sense of bodies in motion is a *collective* one, shared by the different labouring women. By emphasising a collective sense of the kinaesthetics of childbirth, *Sense8* suggests that such kinaesthetic connections are key to the formation of family units and kinship; indeed, in the mythology of the series, the Sensates 'take their first breath as one'. The impact of this scene is arguably strengthened by the fact that it presents an internal audience for us to empathise with in a surrogate fashion. The Sensates sit in the audience, ostensibly watching the symphony but simultaneously watching their own births. They react with exaggerated displays of joy, crying, smiling, laughing (with the exception of Nomi, who is more sombre due to the traumatic nature of the birth scene for many trans people, in which they are assigned an incorrect gender identity).¹⁰⁰ Their reactions indicate that not only are they watching the moment of their birth, but they are emotionally and kinaesthetically empathising with it, experiencing the physical euphoria and emotional joy of the climax of childbirth. Much like Will's kinaesthetic appreciation of the aesthetics of murder in *Hannibal*, the on-screen depiction of a kinaesthetically empathetic audience clearly provides a 'model reader', one who

⁹⁹ Lori Shorr, 'Performing Birth: The Construction of Female Bodies in Instructional Childbirth Videos', *The Velvet Light Trap* 29, (1992), 3-14 (p. 7).

¹⁰⁰ Nomi is also the only character to have been born by caesarean, which makes a dubious and very problematic value distinction between caesarean and vaginal birth.

demonstrates the proper way to respond to the images we see. Like *Hannibal*, then, *Sense8* very clearly offers a preferred reading strategy of kinaesthetic empathy, through which we are invited to imagine different kinds of family structures born from and held together by the feelings of kinaesthetic empathy.

Horrific empathy

Thus far I have been considering how the intersubjectivity of kinaesthetic empathy might transform our normative ideas of how bodies should relate to one another, whether through structures of desire or the kinship bonds of family. Yet as I noted at the beginning of this section, transformation does not always necessarily equate to improvement, and change can be as frightening as it is freeing. There is something fundamentally dangerous about entering into a relationship that blurs the boundaries between your sense of self and that of another person. Phillips and Taylor describe empathy as ‘always hazardous’ because it relies upon a certain susceptibility and openness towards others.¹⁰¹ Lauren Berlant makes a similar point, arguing that empathy’s ability to transform the self is the source of both its hope and horror: as she elegantly states, ‘[t]he possibility that through the identification with alterity you will never be the same remains the radical threat and great promise of this affective aesthetic.’¹⁰² Empathy is frightening because it challenges our dominant understandings of subjectivity, in which we exist as a discrete and individual self. Kinaesthetic empathy might be even more frightening because it involves the permeability of *bodily* boundaries as well as psychic ones, allowing the embodied experience of another person to get under our own skin. Consequently, if kinaesthetic empathy relies on maintaining the distinction between self and other, this may be as much a defensive protection against the loss of autonomous identity as it is a particular form of respect.

¹⁰¹ Adam Phillips and Barbara Taylor, *On Kindness* (London: Penguin, 2009), p. 3.

¹⁰² Lauren Berlant, ‘Poor Eliza’, *American Literature*, 70 (1998), 635-68 (p. 649).

Hannibal uses the dangers of kinaesthetic connection as part of its horror aesthetics. Throughout its three seasons, the programme derives much of its horror from people feeling into and with other bodies in the wrong sorts of ways. In the first two seasons, most of the murderers in the episodic storylines are attempting to find new ways of relating to others, or trying to express some degree of care, albeit in horrific ways. In 'Amuse-Bouche' (1:2), Eldon Stammets (Aidan Devine) plants human corpses in the earth and uses them to grow fungi, entranced with the way fungi form physical networks to connect and communicate with one another – in Will's words, 'he admires their ability to connect the way human minds can't.' In the first two episodes of season two ('Kaiseiki' [2:1]; 'Sakizuki' [2:2]), a man constructs a mural of an eye out of human bodies, attempting to extend the human sensorium beyond a single body. In 'Takiawase' (2:4), an acupuncturist lobotomises her patients to remove their pain, leaving them in meadows to 'die in peace'. 'I protected these people from hopelessness', she tells the BAU team, 'and that's beautiful.' In 'Buffet Froid' (1:10), Georgia Madchen (Ellen Muth) suffers from a neurological disease which renders her unable to see faces. She carves horrific Glasgow smiles into the faces of her childhood friends, trying to find a way through the blank facades she encounters in order to connect to the people she cares about. Again and again, the murders in *Hannibal* are carried out by people who take the logic of kinaesthetic empathy to an extreme, trying to expand humanity's ability to feel with the bodies of their neighbours in ways that go horribly wrong.

Much of the force of *Hannibal*'s horror emerges from the fears of getting too close, whether seeing under the skin, taking on the mindset of a murderer, or consuming human flesh. This is most obviously expressed through the programme's repeated use of extreme close-ups shot in high definition. These shots are part of a broader trend within recent television drama (particularly medical and crime series), in which close-up shots of

the body and its interiors are used for particular affective power and aesthetic value.¹⁰³

Alexia Smit terms this trend ‘tele-affectivity’, arguing that the shots capitalise on television’s capacity to produce a sense of intimacy: ‘intimacy with others, an interest in intersubjectivity and the production of a sense of closeness...[are] at the heart of the appeal that tele-affective shows make to viewers.’¹⁰⁴ Tele-affectivity, then, as an intimate and intersubjective address mediated through proximity to the body, needs to be understood not simply as a question of aesthetics, but as a key part of a reading strategy of kinaesthetic empathy.

Hannibal very obviously exploits the tele-affective power of the close-up.

However, I argue that it employs it as an invitation for kinaesthetic empathy rather than simply what Smit calls ‘privileged looking’.¹⁰⁵ *Hannibal*’s close-ups are often of fairly innocuous objects, rendering the familiar strange in order to evoke a feeling of horror or disgust.¹⁰⁶ In chapter two of this thesis, I argued that although theories of televisual intimacy tend to focus either on familiarity or proximity, these two definitions work together in kinaesthetic reading strategies, which involve both proximity to and familiarity with the ordinary movements of the body. Here, the affective power of the close-up’s proximity is inextricable from its shifting sense of familiarity. In ‘Entree’ (1:6), Hannibal slices a Norton grape, telling Chilton he loves the grape because the flesh is the same colour as the skin. The slicing of the grape occurs in extreme close-up, allowing us to see the textural contrast between the smooth skin surface and the gelatinous flesh (Figures 4.14–4.15). This contrast clearly evokes human skin and flesh, meaning that

¹⁰³ *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and its spinoffs are the most obvious example of this, but the trend can also be seen in programmes such as *American Gods*, *Bones* (Fox, 2005-2017), *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006-2013), *House* (FOX, 2004-2012), and *Nip/Tuck* (FX, 2003-2010).

¹⁰⁴ Alexia Smit, ‘Visual Effects and Visceral Affect: “Tele-Affectivity” and the Intensified Intimacy of Contemporary Television’, *Critical Studies in Television*, 8 (2013), 92-107 (p. 105).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

¹⁰⁶ The famous opening credits for *Dexter* use the exact same technique, using extreme close-up shots of Dexter’s morning routine – shaving, frying bacon, making coffee, tying his shoelaces – to make ordinary, everyday actions horrific. Like *Hannibal*, the credits rely on the audience’s capacity to *feel into* the images, drawing connections between the kinaesthetic qualities of squeezing an orange, tying a knot, or slicing bacon with forms of violent action against humans.



Figure 4.14 Hannibal slices a Norton grape in extreme close-up.



Figure 4.15 The innocuous grape becomes a horrific spectacle of glistening flesh.

Hannibal's fairly innocent action connotes a horrifying form of violence. Importantly, the ability to make this connection relies upon a degree of kinaesthetic empathy, as we feel into Hannibal's fluid violence in order to extrapolate it to human flesh. In this sense, *Hannibal*'s close-ups extend Smit's idea of tele-affectivity to its logical conclusion, in which the intimate power and intersubjective connotations of the close-up become a site for making kinaesthetically empathetic connections.

Once again, the horrific feelings of getting too close are explicitly modelled for us through the character of Will, whose kinaesthetic empathy results in a dangerously unstable and unbounded subjectivity. Season one explores this idea very obviously in the narrative, linking Will's disintegrating mental stability with his inability to separate himself from the murderers he profiles. Throughout the season, various characters all reiterate the idea that Will needs to avoid getting 'too close' to the crime scenes he visits in order to protect his already pathological ability to empathise. Yet as the season progresses, Will's sense of identity becomes more and more unstable. This is expressed most clearly through his increasing imbrication with Garrett Jacob Hobbs, who he murders in the very first episode of the season. During a therapy session with Hannibal in 'Rôti' (1:11), Will admits to Hannibal that he is losing his sense of his identity.

Will: I don't know how to gauge who I am anymore. *[He takes a sharp intake of breath]*. I don't feel like myself. I feel like I have been gradually becoming different for a while. I just feel like somebody else.

Hannibal: What do you feel like?

Will: I feel crazy. *[He breathes shakily]*.

Hannibal: And that is what you fear most.

Will: I fear not knowing who I am.

Will's sense of terror and self-dissociation (expressed through Hugh Dancy's laboured breathing) is further emphasised by the camera angles in this scene, which shift on each of Will's lines. When he explains that he doesn't 'feel like himself', he is shot in a medium close-up. After a short reaction shot of Hannibal, we return to Will on the line 'I just feel like somebody else', this time with a low angle and a tighter frame. The scene cuts to another reverse shot of Hannibal as he delivers his line, then back to a high angle shot of Will, which focuses on the top of his head and obscures most of his face. The contrast between the consistent framing of Hannibal and the shifting spatial position of Will emphasises his unstable grasp of his own identity. This sequence invites us to read Will's self-dissolution through the proxemic mutability of his body's position within the frame: not knowing who you are also means not knowing how to exist logically as a body in space. Earlier in this chapter I suggested that Will was presented as something of a model reader for the audience, demonstrating a mode of kinaesthetic empathy that we were invited to approximate in our own readings of Will and the series as a whole. Will's horrific self-dissolution thus raises interesting questions for the audience's own experience, questions that I will return to explore in more detail in the following section of this chapter. For now, I simply want to conclude that if *Sense8* uses the transformative potential of kinaesthetic empathy as a source of promise and hope, *Hannibal* predominantly explores how it might also be a site for horror, violence, and self-dissolution.

The Ethics of Kinaesthetics: Watching Contemporary TV Drama

Questioning how kinaesthetic empathy might be a productive or pro-social tool clearly raises ethical issues, which are particularly pertinent in the context of the mediated relationships we form with people through our television screens. Indeed, the 'privileged looking' Smit refers to in her discussion of the tele-affective close-up might

also refer to other forms of privilege, in terms of who has the power to look and how. Susan Sontag argues that what she calls ‘tele-intimacy’ creates an illusion of closeness and sympathy, obscuring the various political hierarchies that underpin such regimes of relation. For Sontag, the link between ‘faraway sufferers – seen close-up on the television screen – and the privileged viewer...is simply untrue...yet one more mystification of our real relations to power.’¹⁰⁷ Many of my case studies in this thesis – *Game of Thrones*’s violent spectacle, *Outlander*’s preoccupation with rape, and *Hannibal*’s elaborate murder scenes – suggest that reading television kinaesthetically involves, to paraphrase Sontag, consuming the pain of others. In this sense, as I have suggested elsewhere in this thesis with regard to issues of evaluation and identity, thinking about our kinaesthetic empathy with television necessarily involves thinking about how we participate in particular systems of power.

Yet interestingly, Sontag’s belief in the falsity of televisual empathy revolves around the seeming passivity of television. ‘Compassion is an unstable emotion’, she argues, ‘it needs to be translated into action, or it withers.’¹⁰⁸ Sontag’s argument is clearly too simplistic, and I have already argued for the persistence of real and meaningful (if mediated) structures of empathy with television earlier in this chapter. However, her belief that empathy endures through action has interesting relevance for kinaesthetic empathy. In the introduction to this thesis I suggested that kinaesthesia has a particular propensity for self-reflective thinking and writing – indeed, participating in a kinaesthetic reading strategy so often encourages us to reflect upon our own experience and our own bodies. In this sense, I believe that kinaesthetic empathy might lend itself towards a particular kind of action; namely, an active reflection on the ethical issues involved in watching television. In the final section of this chapter, I want to consider how *Hannibal* and *Sense8*’s reading strategies of kinaesthetic empathy might open up spaces for exploring the ethics of consuming contemporary television drama: the judgements we

¹⁰⁷ Susan Sontag, *Regarding the Pain of Others* (London: Penguin, 2004), p. 91.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

make, the values we internalise, and the forms of relation we enter into when we consume such 'quality' television programmes.

Consuming violence

Hannibal very clearly fits within a quality television pedigree. Like *Six Feet Under* (HBO, 2001-2005) and *The Young Pope* (Sky Atlantic/HBO/Canal+, 2016–), it deliberately employs and plays with tropes of European art cinema (such as elaborately baroque imagery and a high degree of self-reflexivity). Like *The Sopranos* (HBO, 1997-2007) and *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008-2013), it explores the psychological turmoil of its white, male protagonists. Like *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-2015), it presents an elite taste culture as a site for both critique and aspiration. And like *True Detective* (HBO, 2014–), it uses highly aestheticised violence as the centrepiece of its storytelling. Yet I believe that *Hannibal* is highly self-reflexive about its use of these tropes. In 'The Great Red Dragon' (3:8), Chilton tells an incarcerated Hannibal that his 'fancy allusions and your fussy aesthetics will always have niche appeal', but that the serial killer currently dominating the headlines does 'something so universal', a comment as much about *Hannibal* the series as it is about Hannibal Lecter. This self-aware tone, paired with the often-parodic extremes of the programme's use of violence and close-ups, clearly creates a space for critique. Rowena Clarke argues that *Hannibal*'s aesthetic excess 'trains' its viewers to critically interrogate the features of quality television: '*Hannibal* is shot so as both to involve its audience in that aesthetic evaluation, and to make them aware of the techniques of production that render murder into art.'¹⁰⁹ Yet here, Clarke focuses exclusively on a traditional sense of visual aesthetics, reiterating the idea that the audience of quality television has a heightened capacity to appreciate and engage with the 'look' of a programme. She misses the fact that, as I outlined at the beginning of this chapter, Will's 'aesthetic evaluation' of murder scenes is entirely based within kinaesthetic empathy. Therefore, while I agree with Clarke

¹⁰⁹ Rowena Clarke, 'Consuming Television's Golden Age with Hannibal Lecter', *Alluvium*, 5 (2016), para 5. <<https://www.alluvium-journal.org/2016/05/31/consuming-televisions-golden-age-with-hannibal-lecter/>>

that *Hannibal* facilitates a critical reflection on quality television, I instead argue that it works predominantly through its structure of kinaesthetic empathy. Through Will's empathy within the narrative and our empathy with Will, *Hannibal* offers a critique and a reflection on what we do and feel when we watch quality television, how we read its design and feel with its characters.

Quality television drama is characterised by a high prevalence of violence, depicted in varying degrees of realism and explicitness. Linda Holmes, discussing such television in 2012 with *NPR*, describes the world of television drama as 'a very, very gruesome place.'¹¹⁰ Margaret Lyons, in an article for *Vulture* titled 'Good Luck Finding a Decent TV Drama Without Rape or Killing' (prompted by *Hannibal*'s debut), tallied up the numbers of drama programmes in the 2012-2013 season that featured violence. She found an overwhelming ratio of one hundred and nine programmes that depicted or described a violent act, versus a mere sixteen that did not.¹¹¹ She concludes that '[i]f you want to watch good, dramatic television, you will be consuming a lot of stories about rape and murder', suggesting that in the logics of contemporary television, violence and drama equate to quality. *The A.V. Club*'s Todd VanDerWerff describes this formula as 'watching beautiful people get stabbed', tracing its presence in shows such as *The Following* (Fox, 2013-2015), *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006-2013), *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010–), and *Sons of Anarchy* (FX, 2008-2014).¹¹² While he does recognise that violence can serve a narrative purpose, he maintains that violence in quality television is overwhelmingly 'cheap, a way to simply motivate the audience into having a particular reaction.' Each of these critics describes their own affective response to consuming copious amounts of violence on

¹¹⁰ Linda Holmes, 'The Spatter Pattern: Does All The Good Television Have To Be So Bloody', *NPR*, 5 December 2012. <<http://www.npr.org/sections/monkeysee/2012/12/05/166565578/the-spatter-pattern-does-all-the-good-television-have-to-be-so-bloody>>

¹¹¹ Margaret Lyons, 'Maxing Out on Murder: Good Luck Finding a Decent TV Drama Without Rape or Killing', *Vulture*, 17 April 2013. <<http://www.vulture.com/2013/04/maxing-out-on-murder-shows.html>>

¹¹² Todd VanDerWerff, 'Why Shows Like *The Following* Cheapen Violence and Diminish its Power', *The A.V. Club*, 18 February 2013. <<http://www.avclub.com/article/why-shows-like-ithe-followingi-cheapen-violence-an-92592>>

television – Lyons is ‘maxed out’, Holmes is ‘miserable’, and VanDerWerff ‘feel[s] like dog shit.’ Each of these critics also expresses concerns about desensitisation and taste, worrying that the connection between violence and quality both increases the audience’s tolerance of violence, and ensures that violence becomes the only way to tell a story worth telling.

Concerns about television violence are by no means new. Both the mainstream media and the scholarly literature have agonised over the effects of watching violence for decades. An in-depth exploration of this debate is beyond the scope of this thesis, but put simply, the fear is that consuming violent media leads to both increased aggression and increased desensitisation to violent acts. In other words, watching violence may have a causal relationship to committing violence. Media effects research has explored this hypothesis in depth, but results have been somewhat inconsistent and contentious.¹¹³ For my purposes, what is significant in this debate is how it takes the presence of kinaesthetic empathy for granted (if in a somewhat simplified paradigm): watching the actions of a body involves feeling those actions within our body, to the extent that they become familiar to us and we desire to actively perform them ourselves. Yet again, the question of what audiences actually do with the television they watch is not the question I am attempting to answer in this thesis. What I am interested in is how programmes such as *Hannibal* presume that this relationship between violent imagery, kinaesthetic empathy, and audiences exists, and how this becomes integral to the programme’s narrative structure and preferred reading strategies.

Hannibal is arguably a story of the effects of watching violence. Over its three seasons Will Graham struggles with mental instability and feelings of complicity in the violence he observes and imagines as part of his work, eventually culminating in his willing participation in Hannibal’s violent world at the end of season two and throughout season three. ‘You know what looking at this does [to me]’, Will tells Jack Crawford in

¹¹³ For an overview of this debate, see *Ill Effects: The Media Violence Debate*, ed. by Martin Barker and Julian Petley (London: Routledge, 1997).

‘Coquilles’ (1:5), and Jack later worries that it’s ‘becoming easier for you to look’ (Fromage 1:8). It seems easy to read Will as a cautionary tale of what happens when we watch too much violence, particularly serialised violence. This is not necessarily new, of course: the horror genre has a long history of problematising the power of vision. In her work on the slasher film, Carol Clover compellingly demonstrates how the genre is invested in exploring the relationship between vision and touch, or what she terms ‘hurttable vision’.¹¹⁴ Susan Crutchfield furthers Clover’s point in relation to questions of re-enactment, arguing that horror’s ‘representations of vision and the visual are profoundly mimetic...visual copy and visual contact converge in a violent gesture of physical involvement.’¹¹⁵ *Hannibal* is clearly aware of these ideas and these debates, dramatising them through Will’s increasing involvement in the violence he empathises with. Yet as the model reader for the audience, Will’s complicity with violence invites the audience to similarly question their own capacity to kinaesthetically empathise with this violence. By presenting Will’s kinaesthetic empathy as both a model reading strategy for the audience *and* a site for horrific events within the narrative, *Hannibal* offers a space for reflection on how we read, consume, and enjoy violent quality serial drama.

One of the earliest examples of *Hannibal*’s use of empathy as self-reflexive critique occurs in ‘Potage’ (1:3), when Will has a vivid dream about murdering Abigail Hobbs. In the dream Will takes the place of her father, enacting the moment in which Hobbs slices his daughter’s throat. The dream reflects Will’s anxiety that his empathic merger with Hobbs has kindled a desire to perform the same violent gestures. Yet the scene is particularly interesting for where and how it positions the audience. As Will slices Abigail’s throat, the wide arc of his arm sends the blood flying towards the camera, splattering across its lens. Of course, the idea that a bloodied camera implies a degree of participation in the image is a somewhat unoriginal interpretation. Yet what is important

¹¹⁴ Carol Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 205.

¹¹⁵ Susan Crutchfield, ‘Touching Scenes and Finishing Touches: Blindness in the Slasher Film’, in *Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media*, ed. by Christopher Sharrett (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999). pp. 275-299 (p. 277).

is that this moment recalls the original violent scene from 'Aperitif' (1:1), in which Will's glasses are splattered with blood in an identical bloodying of the vision. In the dream sequence, then, we are not simply a disembodied observer, but are placed in the shoes of Will himself. If Will becomes Garrett Jacob Hobbs in this moment, then the audience becomes Will, invited to engage with the scene in the same form of kinaesthetic empathy as Will himself.

The scene is shot in slight slow motion, turning Will's violent act – slicing the throat of a young woman – into a graceful and athletic action. I was entranced by this sequence when I first watched it, captivated by the kinaesthetic beauty of the smooth, flowing movement of an arm gliding purposefully through the air. Yet I was equally horrified with my fixation with this violent act, and how easily I could kinaesthetically empathise with the actions of murder. Over the course of the season, I would learn what viewing aestheticised violence would do to Will, yet the question I kept returning to was what it might in turn be doing to me. I was not alone in my concerns over this question. Todd VanDerWerff, whose scathing critique of television violence I quoted earlier in this discussion, strongly believes that *Hannibal* does something different precisely through the way it invites us to feel with Will: '[the show] forces the viewer to take on the weight of all that murder as surely as the characters do'.¹¹⁶ I argue that this weight is felt precisely through kinaesthetic empathy: just as Will takes on the weight of murders through his ability to kinaesthetically empathise with them, so too do we, through how we are invited to read the programme itself. Of course, *Hannibal* is not interested in presenting a clear moral judgement, and neither am I: rather, I simply want to demonstrate that the series uses its preferred reading strategy of kinaesthetic empathy to open a space for reflection about consuming violent, quality television.

Of course, it is not simply the exposure to violence that is the problem for Will (or in media effects research), but the repeated, accumulated, *serial* consumption of such

¹¹⁶ Todd VanDerWerff, 'Hannibal Returns the Fear of Death to the TV Crime Drama', *The A.V. Club*, 21 June 2013. <<http://www.avclub.com/article/ihannibali-returns-the-fear-of-death-to-the-tv-crim-99265>>

violence. The dream sequence is incredibly stylised, shot in crisp high definition in an evocative autumn setting. Consequently, the scene becomes a highly aestheticised copy of the original scene, one that can be read as a critique of watching aestheticised, *serialised* violence. Robert Ressler, a former FBI agent who is often credited with coining the term 'serial killer', specifically links the origins of the term with serial narrative.

I think what was...in my mind were the serial adventures we used to see on Saturday at the movies... Each week, you'd be lured back to see another episode, because at the end of each one there was a cliffhanger. In dramatic terms, this wasn't a satisfactory ending, because it increased, not lessened the tension. The same dissatisfaction occurs in the minds of serial killers. The very act of killing leaves the murderer hanging, because it isn't as perfect as his fantasy.¹¹⁷

Unsurprisingly, Ressler's comments have been widely taken up to explore the link between serial killers, serial killer narratives, and the structure of mass culture. Annalee Newitz wonders whether American audiences love serial killer stories because these crimes are 'so-well adapted to the mass cultural form.'¹¹⁸ Mark Seltzer is even more emphatic in his belief that '[t]he question of serial killing cannot be separated from the general forms of seriality...in consumer society'.¹¹⁹ Seltzer goes on to suggest that the connection between serial crimes and serial narratives 'posit[s] something like an equation between acts of killing and an addiction to representations'.¹²⁰ The serial killer narrative, particularly as it finds its home within the serial narrative structures of quality television, may work to comment on our own obsessions with serial representations of violence.

The second half of *Hannibal*'s third season adapts Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon* novel, which revolves around serial murderer Francis Dolarhyde (Richard Armitage).

¹¹⁷ Cited in Annalee Newitz, 'Serial Killers, True Crime, and Economic Performance Anxiety', in *Mythologies of Violence in Postmodern Media*, ed. by Christopher Sharrett (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1999). pp. 65-83 (p. 76).

¹¹⁸ Ibid., p. 76.

¹¹⁹ Mark Seltzer, 'Serial Killers (I)', *differences*, 5 (1993), 92-128 (p. 94).

¹²⁰ Ibid., p. 94.

While somewhat removed from the general arc of the series (which focuses on the psychological power play between Will and Hannibal), the storyline perfectly encapsulates most of *Hannibal*'s major thematic concerns – representation, violence, and bodily incorporation and transformation. Dolarhyde is obsessed with William Blake's series of watercolour prints, *The Great Red Dragon*, to the extent that he has the dragon tattooed upon his back. 'The Great Red Dragon' (3:8) opens with a scene of Dolarhyde exercising in a grotesque fashion, crawling along the floor, balancing on his hands, and doing pull-ups (Figure 4.17). The sequence is extraordinarily kinaesthetic, focusing on

Richard Armitage's contorting muscles as they ripple across his body. The scene's tension is inextricable from the tension of Armitage's

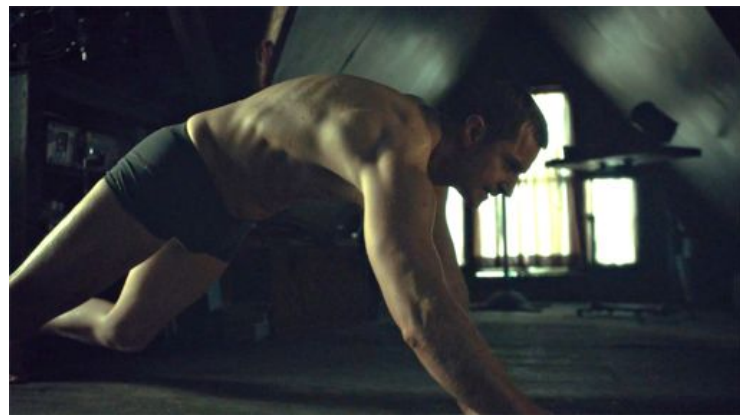


Figure 4.17 Dolarhyde attempts to kinaesthetically transform into the object of his obsession.

muscles: the atonal music prevents any sense of rhythm or release, instead creating a feeling of endless stretching and tautness. Dolarhyde's movement is an attempt to replicate the powerful muscularity of the Red Dragon himself. Like Will, Dolarhyde feels into Blake's painting to the extent that he feels it within his own body. And like Will, we are invited to read Dolarhyde's character through his kinaesthetics, which are a manifestation of his empathetic relationship with particular aesthetic objects.

In '...And the Woman Clothed in Sun' (3:10), Dolarhyde visits a museum where the original watercolour of *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed in Sun* is kept. The curator who displays the print instructs him not to touch it, and he quickly renders her unconscious with a blow to the head and proceeds to rub his cheek along the print. He then *eats* it, scrunching it up into smaller pieces and frantically shoving them into his mouth. Dolarhyde's obsession with Blake's series of paintings – an obsession that has already been established through his kinaesthetic empathy with the painting – finds its

ultimate release in his very literal consumption of the image. We consume the things we love, the scene suggests, and even when such objects are representational forms we believe we cannot touch, this consumption is nonetheless bodily. The scene is disquieting, both for the bizarre spectacle of watching someone eat a priceless painting, but also because it offers a reflection on our own connection to our representational media. Many of us know too well the feeling of greedily consuming serial drama, devouring it in a frenzy perhaps not so far removed from Dolarhyde's grotesquerie. As Amy Holdsworth has compellingly argued, watching another person eat on television encourages a powerful form of embodied empathy, something *Hannibal* repeatedly exploits in the many scenes in which Hannibal unwittingly feeds human flesh to his guests.¹²¹ Yet in this scene, watching Dolarhyde eat the painting might encourage us to recognise something of ourselves and our own connection to our beloved serial art, considering what sorts of bodily complicity and violence we might be participating in when we consume our prestige television dramas. Again, I am not suggesting that *Hannibal* makes a moral judgement on its own genre. Rather, I simply want to suggest that the programme embeds a degree self-criticism within its kinaesthetic reading strategy, and that this part of the show's ultimate design.

Consuming the world

As well as reflecting upon the bodily complicity we have with our serial television dramas, kinaesthetic empathy offers space for considering where television takes us, or the kinds of access it gives us to distant places and people. Like aestheticised violence, prestige drama is characterised by a sense of worldliness and its seemingly 'universal' appeal. Jason Jacobs celebrates US television drama for its ability to transcend its local context, taking 'local stories and specifically national histories and find[ing] universal

¹²¹ Amy Holdsworth, 'Eating/Television', keynote delivered at *Material Cultures of Television*, University of Hull, 21-22 March 2016.

resonances that connect strongly to a culturally diverse range of global audiences'.¹²²

Helen Piper strongly criticises Jacobs's argument, objecting to what she calls the 'conveniently globalising abstraction of "the aesthetic"',¹²³ and bemoaning the belief that 'nothing resonates as "universally" as the existential crisis of a white, male American'.¹²⁴

While I agree entirely with Piper, the fact remains that much quality television markets itself as such through its participation in a global imaginary.¹²⁵ In the final part of this chapter, I want to explore how quality drama invites us to read it through a sense of global address, and whether such dominant reading strategies might contain a space for critique.

In my second chapter I explored the deep relationship between travel and television, suggesting that the kinaesthetic reading strategies employed in serial drama exploit and play with this fundamental property of the medium. John Urry identifies tourism and screen media as two of the dominant modes of seeing in the contemporary world, both forms of 'vision constructed through mobile images and representational technologies'.¹²⁶ Urry focuses his comparison on the ways in which both modes of seeing are culturally constructed, and so glosses over what is arguably the most important parallel between the tourist and televisual gazes – they are both ways of *seeing the Other*. Like narrative fiction, we tend to believe that travel helps promote empathy by giving us access to people and places beyond our own immediate point of view: expanding our horizons of feeling, inspiring broader ties of solidarity, and creating a cosmopolitan form of community. Yet again, this pro-social framing masks some of the more problematic

¹²² Jason Jacobs, 'The Medium in Crisis: Caughie, Brunson and the Problem of US Television', *Screen*, 52 (2011), 503-11 (p. 509).

¹²³ Helen Piper, 'Broadcast Drama and the Problem of Television Aesthetics: Home, Nation, Universe', *Screen*, 57 (2016), 163-83 (p. 164).

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 163.

¹²⁵ *Lost* and *Heroes* (NBC 2006-2010) both use ensemble casts with different nationalities and backgrounds, linking global scope and diversity with a sense of quality and complexity. The increasing prevalence of transnational adaptations also exploits the link between quality and globality, in which the transnational origins of a programme are used as a source of cultural capital and taste (see the US adaptation of *Bron/Broen* (DR1/SVT1, 2011-), *The Bridge* (FX, 2013-2014), or the adaptation of *Broadchurch* (ITV, 2013-), *Gracepoint* (FOX, 2014-).

¹²⁶ John Urry and Jonas Larsen, *The Tourist Gaze 3.0* (London: Sage, 2011) p. 2.

elements common to both travel and empathy – issues of cultural imperialism, colonialism, and Othering. These issues are even more pressing when kinaesthesia enters the equation, for (as I explored in chapter three) it brings with it assumptions about the universality of embodied experience. Indeed, the empathy associated with travel tends to be framed (although not termed) as kinaesthetic empathy, reiterated through the conviction that moving one's body into new places and among new people is the proper way to enter into more authentic forms of knowledge and connection.¹²⁷

Questioning the assumptions and power dynamics associated with the global politics of empathy is a task that has much relevance to television, which has always been something we turn to in order to gain access to the world. Yet this is particularly important with regard to television's new structures of distribution, which, as Karen Lury argues in the piece I quoted at the very beginning of this chapter, has the power to transform television's 'common culture' of empathy.¹²⁸ Of course, I do not want to suggest that television has suddenly become global sometime in the last two decades: as the quintessential 'window on the world', television has always been a source for popular knowledge about the world, and as the archetypal 'global village', television has always promised to bring the whole world together within the intimate ties of community and belonging.¹²⁹ However, the story of television's relationship to the world is inextricable from the history of its patterns of distribution, which have undergone significant changes in recent years. By this, I refer to the rise of digital distribution mechanisms in which television is made available through online platforms, and particularly to the rapid growth of streaming services such as Netflix, Hulu, and Amazon Prime. Most discussions

¹²⁷ Helen Wheatley makes a similar point with regard to what she calls 'reality/holiday show hybrids', which combine reality and travel television. She notes that these programmes often use the experience of travel in order to explore class conflict, as the middle-class belief in travel's improving qualities clashes with the 'lower-class' preference for resorts and package holidays. See *Spectacular Television: Exploring Televisual Pleasure* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2016), pp. 145-46.

¹²⁸ Lury, 'The Loss of the Contingent in Digital Television', p. 201.

¹²⁹ Of course, this promise departs from colonial desires as much as it does from empathic ones, as Helen Wheatley astutely points out in her work on television as a 'colonial apparatus'. See *Spectacular Television*, p. 97.

of digital distribution use the same sorts of language as ideologies of globalisation, celebrating the emancipation from the physical limitations of the local. James Bennett and Niki Strange epitomise this trend in their claim that once television becomes consumed as part of digital media, it ‘must be understood as a non-site-specific, hybrid cultural and technological form’.¹³⁰ In this sense, if the digital seems to promise to transcend the specificity of the local, then it also promises to create new kinds of televisual communities. In an article for *The New Yorker*, Adam Gopnik suggests that the Internet creates not just a global community but ways of thinking and feeling that are shared across the globe. ‘If television produced the global village’, he suggests, ‘the Internet produces the global psyche’.¹³¹ Online television services such as Netflix are a crucial site for thinking about how cultural difference is consumed on television today, and how we are invited to feel with and relate to a sense of global community and identity.

Streaming television services explicitly reflect upon their relationship to the world in their paratextual material. In January 2016, Netflix released a promotional video to mark its global rollout, with the tagline ‘Storytelling is global. Now, so are we’.¹³² The video uses clips from its original programming to create an uplifting and celebratory depiction of free movement. It pairs a stirring choral soundtrack with quotes that emphasise the emancipation from the local: the ‘greatest adventure of all’ from *Marco Polo* (Netflix 2014–), the ability to ‘change the world’ from *Jessica Jones* (Netflix 2015–), and ‘you are no longer just you’ from *Sense8*. The advertisement suggests that digital television gives us access to a global spirit of agency and connection, and frames this as something new and revolutionary, claiming that only Netflix can properly exploit our desire to connect on a global scale. This paratextual framing deliberately sets up a particular

¹³⁰ James Bennett and Niki Strange, ‘Introduction’, in *Television as Digital Media*, ed. by James Bennett and Niki Strange (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), pp. 1–27 (p. 2).

¹³¹ Adam Gopnik, ‘How the Internet Gets Inside Us’, *The New Yorker*, 14 February 2011. <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/02/14/the-information>>

¹³² Netflix US and Canada, ‘Now Streaming Worldwide [HD] | Netflix (Post)’, *YouTube*, 6 January 2016. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=GvQs89U_tVo>

reading strategy, in which audiences are invited to access Netflix's programmes as a global citizen.

Sense8 is perhaps the epitome of Netflix's global desires. Its narrative is transnational in scope, deliberately telling a story that spans the globe. It was filmed across the world, shooting in the nine cities featured in the narrative (rather than dressing locations in the US), and hiring local cast and crew. Its thematic core – forging authentic and diverse connections at a distance – reflects television's (and the internet's) utopian promise to break down the barriers of distance and difference that prevent people from connecting with one another. Garde-Hansen and Gorton, in their discussion of the economic and cultural system of globality, suggest that *Lost* is this system in essence – 'panoramic, inclusive, heterogeneous, and engaging with Others.'¹³³ *Sense8* not only follows in *Lost*'s footsteps but arguably outpaces it: if *Lost* explores how a global community learns to relate to one another when occupying the same space, then *Sense8* imagines how these relationships might still exist through a mediated structure of telepresence. Like Netflix's promotional material, the programme promotes the mobile, empathetic global citizen as the preferred, superior class of person. This idea is made more explicit through *Sense8*'s pseudo-evolutionary discourse, in which the cosmopolitan and culturally aware Sensates are presented as an original and superior evolutionary branch of the human race. Jonas tells Will that 'one small chromosome mutation severed them [non-Sensates] from their connection to each other', presenting non-Sensates as an evolutionary error. Overall, then, the series draws an implicit link between travel and the capacity to feel, and wraps this up in a teleological discourse of evolutionary progress that fits perfectly within Netflix's global imagination.

Sense8's global utopia has been attacked by critics for its reiteration of particular cultural stereotypes. Giselle Defares, writing for *BitchFlicks*, expresses her frustration that the Wachowskis 'opt to include every cliché in the book when it comes to the non-western

¹³³ Joanne Garde-Hansen and Kristyn Gorton, *Emotion Online: Theorising Affect on the Internet* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013), p. 19.

countries';¹³⁴ and *Autostraddle*'s Mey states that the 'stereotypical nature of all these characters almost cancels out their diversity'.¹³⁵ In my discussion of rape narratives in chapter three, I argued that evaluating such representations as either 'good' or 'bad' was too simplistic. I believe that the same holds for approaching *Sense8*'s cultural diversity, particularly because the idea of a 'good' cultural representation (as judged by a Western audience) too often reflects the desire to have a 'real' encounter with an 'authentic' Other as a means of personal improvement. Dismissing a representation for being 'bad' or 'stereotyped' presumes that a 'good' or 'accurate' representation is possible, and that it possesses a moral value that transfers onto the people who choose to consume it. Yet no narrative representation can ever do justice to the complexity of identity and culture; rather, they will always be partial and contingent and a product of particular power relations. Instead, I follow Homi Bhabha in suggesting that we need to figure out how and why stereotypes work the way they do, in order to determine what particular structures of feeling and modes of encounter they invite us to enter into. Echoing Projansky's discussion of rape, Bhabha suggests that the 'point of intervention should shift from the ready recognition of images as positive or negative, to an understanding of the *processes of subjectification* made possible (and plausible) through stereotypical discourses.'¹³⁶ In other words, we need to consider what sorts of subject positions, speaking positions, and reading strategies are offered to us through stereotypes, and how and why these might operate in the way they do.

In a review for *Nerds of Colour*, Claire Light harshly criticises the global imagination of the series, and takes particular issue with its use of filmic tropes.

Worse, the *filmic* clichés of each country are brought to bear on the production in each location...Nairobi is sweaty, garish, earth-toned, radiantly shabby;

¹³⁴ Giselle Defares, 'The American Lens on Global Unity in "Sense8"', *BitchFicks*, 15 June 2015. <<http://www.btchficks.com/2015/06/the-american-lens-on-global-unity-in-sense8.html>>

¹³⁵ Mey, 'Should You Watch Sense8? The Answer's About as Clear as This Show's Plot', *Autostraddle*, 22 June 2015. <<http://www.autostraddle.com/should-you-watch-sense8-the-answers-about-as-clear-as-this-shows-plot-293147/>>

¹³⁶ Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), p. 67.

Mumbai is multicoloured, and Hindu iconned, full of the jewellery, silks, flowers, and jubilant crowds that burst out of classic Bollywood; Seoul is clean to the point of sterility, with little patches of grass and mirrors and windows everywhere, a grey, hi-tech aesthetic; Mexico City is jewel-toned, rife with skulls, full of melodrama deliberately reminiscent of the telenovela; etc. I believe, quite literally, that *the filmmakers primarily learned about these other cultures through their films, and considered that enough.* (emphasis added)¹³⁷

While I agree entirely with Light's reading of the series, I do not share her evaluation of this particular intertextual framing as an inherent failure of the series – or at least, I do not think that this is cause for dismissal. In my discussion of tourism discourses in chapter two, I argued against the notion that tourism gives us objective access to authentic objects and places. Instead, following the work of Ning Wang, I suggested that affective experience is the true site of authenticity in tourism, particularly the kinaesthetic experience of being and acting as a body in space. Therefore, while Light is entirely correct – *Sense8* does present a vision of the world filtered through other media texts – I would suggest that this affective mode of encountering the world becomes the true site of authenticity in the series. Like my earlier suggestion that (through kinaesthetic empathy) we can read *Hannibal* as a reflection on how we watch violence, I believe *Sense8* offers a reflection on how we read, access, consume the world through a form of kinaesthetic empathy with screen media.¹³⁸

¹³⁷ Claire Light, 'Sense8 and the Failure of the Global Imagination', *Nerds of Color*, June 10 2015, <<http://thenerdsofcolor.org/2015/06/10/sense8-and-the-failure-of-global-imagination/>>

¹³⁸ It is worth noting that this is also the main theme in the Wachowski's adaptation of *Cloud Atlas*. While most of the reviewers focus on how the film tells a story of lives that intersect through history, the connections between the characters occur through mediated narrative – Frobisher (Ben Whishaw) reads Ewing's (Jim Sturgess) diary, Luisa Rey (Halle Berry) seeks out Frobisher's symphony, Cavendish (Jim Broadbent) reads a manuscript based on Rey's life, Sonmi-451 (Doona Bae) watches a filmed (or televised) version of Cavendish's 'ghastly ordeal', and Zachry (Tom Hanks) encounters a hologram of Sonmi-451's manifesto. The film suggests that relationships between people operate through consuming their stories, stories that have always and will always be told through different media forms.

Many of *Sense8*'s intertextual borrowings and filmic tropes relate to particular *kinaesthetic* tropes: from Kala's Bollywood dance number ('I Am Also a We' 1:2) to Sun's fighting ring ('Smart Money is on the Skinny Bitch' 1:3) to Wolfgang's bazooka fight ('What Is Human?' 1:10), these scenes seem feel more like performances of a particular set of cinematic kinaesthetics than an organic part of the story. Consequently, the stereotypes and tropes reflect previous moments of kinaesthetic empathy with screen texts – moments in which the Wachowskis might have *felt with* screen bodies, feeling into the kinetic qualities of the storytelling to the extent that they externalise it anew in their own filmmaking. Like *Hannibal*'s reflection on violence, this theme explicitly emerges within the narrative itself (and thus can be accessed as a preferred reading strategy). At Rajan (Purab Kohli) and Kala's engagement party, he performs a dance number from the Bollywood film they watched on their first date ('I Am Also a We' 1:2). He tells the guests at the party that 'when Shah Rukh Khan sang "I See God in You," and I saw tears in her eyes, I hoped more than anything I've ever wanted that one day she might feel that way for me.' Rajan thus exploits Kala's kinaesthetic empathy, hoping that the affective ties she feels with the dancing of a screen body might also be evoked when his own body performs the same movements. The scene thus stands as a testament to how our relationships with the world and with one another are mediated through kinaesthetic empathy with screen media.

This reflexive theme is even more obviously expressed through Capheus's idolisation of Jean-Claude Van Damme. Capheus often explicitly frames his movement through the world in reference to Van Damme's own stunts and actions (such as when he pulls off a difficult car stunt while helping Nomi escape in 'We Will All Be Judged by the Courage of Our Hearts' [1:8], based on a stunt he saw in *Hard Target* [John Woo, 1993]). In 'What Is Human?' (1:10), Kala and Capheus watch Van Damme's *Lionheart* (Lettich, 1990) together, and Capheus tells her that he watches it whenever he needs to feel courage. Capheus thus accesses a sense of courage through watching Van Damme fight, clearly suggesting that he feels a sense of kinaesthetic empathy with the choreography of the

screen body that translates into a particular affective structure in his own life. This perfectly parallels Aaron Anderson's account of the kinaesthetic experience of watching martial arts films (which I described earlier in the chapter), in which his senior army drill instructor screened Bruce Lee films to encourage a feeling of 'invincibility'.¹³⁹ Yet importantly, like Anderson (who watched Bruce Lee films on VHS in the hallway of his barracks), Capheus watches *television* specifically, in a quintessentially televisual environment – repetitive, familiar, and domestic (Figure 4.17). This is emphasised in the dialogue between the characters at the beginning of the scene.



Figure 4.17 Capheus and Kala watch television together.

Kala: Can I ask you a question?

Capheus: Of course.

Kala: The first time I went into a house like this in Bombay they had no beds, but they had a television as big as this. I mean, how can a TV be more important than a bed?

Capheus: Ah. That's simple. The bed keeps you in a slum; the flat screen takes you out.

Capheus's dialogue here emphasises the belief that television allows us to get outside ourselves, feeling with other people and into other places. Yet the scenario Kala paints is a cultural stereotype, and Capheus's heroic line clearly obscures many of the complex processes that govern the purchasing power of people living in poverty in the global South. However, this ambivalence arguably opens up a critical space for reflection. If Capheus uses his television for experiences of kinaesthetic empathy that take him outside

¹³⁹ Anderson, 'Kinaesthesia in Martial Arts Films', p. 1.

his immediate location, then *Sense8* seems to hold the promise that it might do the same for us. The scene thus invites us to consider how, why, or to what extent the kinaesthetic empathy we are encouraged to feel with the world of *Sense8* and its characters might also take *us* out, inviting us outside the limitations of our own bodies, experiences, and perspectives.

Throughout this thesis, I have been repeatedly returning to Misha Kavka's belief that television produces an affective reality that remains significant and real, despite how mediated its sensations may be. With Kavka in mind, I want to conclude by suggesting that *Sense8*'s affective reality is largely one of how we relate to the world through mediated bodily engagement, a structure that applies entirely to our consumption of global streaming television. John Ellis argues that television acts as a form of 'working through', a means of repeating and turning over certain ideas, relating them to our own feelings and experiences in order to make sense of them.¹⁴⁰ Like Kavka's affective realities, reading and feeling with television as a means of working through is less about finally seeing an authentic truth than finding a way to make sense of particular feelings and narratives. *Hannibal* works through questions of consuming aestheticised violence through its reading strategy of kinaesthetic empathy; *Sense8* uses the exact same strategy to work through questions of how we access the world through our media texts. If we turn to *Sense8* expecting to consume authentic representations of cultural others – representations that will broaden our horizons and leave us improved as people – we are participating in the same insidiously pro-social discourses that have plagued empathy since its beginning. If we dismiss *Sense8* for the paucity of its representations, we are missing what it has to tell us about the affective realities of a televisual world. Similarly, if we reject *Hannibal* for participating in the same patterns of aestheticised violence as quality television, we lose the opportunity to interrogate our corporeal relationship with the television we consume. If, however, we are prepared to feel with these serial programmes and their characters, accompanying them in a structure of kinaesthetic

¹⁴⁰ John Ellis, *Seeing Things: Television in the Age of Uncertainty* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2000).

empathy, we might just be able to glimpse a way of feeling with the world as an imperfect work in progress.

Conclusion

To some extent, *Hannibal* and *Sense8* do the same work I have attempted to do in this thesis, thinking about how the body is crucial to quality television's reading strategies, narrative structures, and representational paradigms. Consequently, the pressing questions the programmes raise are the same ones I have been overwhelmingly concerned with throughout my argument. In presenting kinaesthetic empathy as their preferred reading strategy, the two series both believe in the doubled relationship between the aesthetic and the kinaesthetic that forms the foundation of my argument. Through modelling characters that relate both to one another and to aesthetic displays and media narratives through the body, they encourage us to similarly consume our mediated narratives through our own sense of kinaesthetic empathy. Both programmes consider how kinaesthetic empathy might intervene in political questions of identity, desire, and community, creating new modes of relation that are as terrifying as they are transformative. And both provide a commentary on their own position within quality television, using their kinaesthetic reading strategies to invite reflection on how we evaluate, construct, and consume television drama in the contemporary world.

There remains something powerful about the belief in empathy's transformative potential, something that I, like many other theorists, am somewhat unwilling to give up. Carolyn Pedwell offers a compelling and thorough critique of how discourses of empathy operate in relation to ideas of transnationality, yet retains the hope that empathy 'might function as an affective portal to imagining, and journeying towards, different spaces and times of social justice.'¹⁴¹ In 'Happy Fucking New Year' (2:1), *Sense8* again returns to

¹⁴¹ Carolyn Pedwell, *Affective Relations: The Transnational Politics of Empathy* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 36.

Capheus's relationship with media as a way to comment on its own narrative. He watches *It's a Wonderful Life* (Frank Capra, 1946) on Christmas Eve, sitting on the couch with his mother Shiro (Chichi Seii).

Shiro: Why do you like watching this silly movie every year?

Capheus: I don't know. I guess I like what it believes in.

Shiro: What does it believe in?

Capheus: People.

As a surrogate spectator (or model reader), Capheus's comment refers as much to *Sense8* (and our relationship to it) as it does to *It's A Wonderful Life*. Yet I would argue that belief in people is perhaps one of the defining characteristics of serial television, particularly programmes that rely upon kinaesthetic reading strategies. Both *Hannibal* and *Sense8* believe in people and the various ties of belonging, intimacy, and connection we form between our bodies. And more importantly, they (like Capheus) believe that the repetitive, familiar, ordinary rituals of consuming serial television act as a testament to that belief, a way of connecting to and experiencing empathy with others. Like all belief, this may be messy, imperfect, and at times problematic. Yet like all belief, it acts as frame of reference through which we are invited to read, make sense of, and feel with both screen narratives and with one another, a mode of reading that retains a strong sense of hope for a transformative future.

CONCLUSION

In early 2017, strange groups of women were spotted walking the streets and congregating at train stations in various cities around the world, such as New York, Austin, and Sydney. The women wore long red robes and white bonnets and walked silently in pairs, heads bowed and hands clasped (Figure 5.1). This was not the emergence of a strange cult, but part of a promotional campaign for *The Handmaid's Tale* (Hulu 2017–), the television adaptation of Margaret Atwood's 1985 dystopian novel. The ten episode first season premiered in April 2017, broadcast on the Hulu streaming service in the US, and Channel 4 in the UK. The series is set in a not-too-distant future in which a far-right totalitarian Christian group has violently overthrown the US government, establishing a new puritan society based on Biblical teachings. In the 'Republic of Gilead', women are assigned limited roles according to a strict hierarchical system of labour: Marthas (domestic servitude), Handmaids (reproductive slavery), Aunts (the education and control of handmaids), or the privileged role as the wife of one of the male commanders. The critical reception of *The Handmaid's Tale* has been overwhelmingly positive: *The Guardian's* Sam Wollaston called it 'brilliant television',¹ and *The AV Club's* Allison Shoemaker described it as 'better than good television'.² Critics have also emphasised how the narrative resonates perfectly with the political context of 2017, a time marked by angry protests, the resurgence of misogynist fascism, and concerns about the insidious processes by which ugly ideologies become normalised.³ The future the narrative imagines, then, feels increasingly within reach.

¹ Sam Wollaston, 'The Handmaid's Tale Review – The Best Thing You'll Watch All Year', *The Guardian*, 29 May 2017. <<http://www.theguardian.com/tv-and-radio/2017/may/29/handmaids-tale-review-best-thing-youll-watch-all-year>>

² Allison Shoemaker, 'The Handmaid's Tale will not become ordinary', *The A.V. Club*, 26 April 2017. <<http://www.avclub.com/tvclub/handmaids-tale-will-not-become-ordinary-254313>>

³ Emily Nussbaum refers to the 'grotesque timeliness' of a narrative concerned with 'fake news, political trauma, the abnormal normalized.' 'A Cunning Adaptation of "The Handmaid's Tale"', *The New Yorker*, 22 May 2017. <<http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2017/05/22/a-cunning-adaptation-of-the-handmaids-tale>>

Yet it is noteworthy that the way *The Handmaid's Tale* chooses to imagine and promote that future works predominantly through kinaesthesia. Rather than advertise the series simply through posters or trailers, Hulu chose a campaign that revolved around the moving bodies of women. Much has been made of the handmaids' costumes – the blood red robes and white bonnets – as symbols of oppression and puritan bigotry.

However, I would argue that the impact of the costumes is inextricable from the particular kinaesthetics they encourage. The weight of the bonnets and the robes point the heads and shoulders of the women towards the ground; the length of the robes slows their pace;



Figure 5.1 Kinaesthetically promoting *The Handmaid's Tale* in Sydney.

and the way the bonnets obscure their peripheral vision forces them to walk in straight, narrow lines. Rather than simply being a visual signifier of their societal position, the costumes ensure that the women constantly kinaesthetically perform their submission under the authoritarian regime. These particular submissive kinaesthetics are, of course, highly (and traditionally) gendered, in terms of reiterating connotations between femininity and reticence, smallness, and restricted movements.⁴ Women dressed as handmaids have been a regular fixture at demonstrations in the US, particularly those surrounding the infringement of reproductive and civil rights. Here, audiences replicate the drama's kinaesthetics of oppression as a form of political action, reflecting both a kinaesthetic engagement with the television drama, and the powerful relationship between kinaesthesia and identity politics. Symbolising authoritarian power through the policed and controlled movements of the people is not new: Foucault's notion of 'biopower' recognises that disciplinary practices have always worked particularly well

⁴ They also evoke women's religious garments that cover the body, such as a Christian nun's habit or a Muslim woman's burqa. The particular values and meanings attached to these garments is a topic beyond the scope of this thesis, but the costumes in *The Handmaid's Tale* do the fact that in dominant Western culture, such garments are seen to be a symptom of patriarchal oppression.

when mediated through the bodies of the population.⁵ Yet the explicit use of kinaesthesia as a narrative device, promotional tool, and form of engagement with *The Handmaid's Tale* suggests that we continue to tell, to read, and to work through stories of power and identity through the body in motion. And if the programme is, as I have already noted, particularly of its time, then it suggests that what we recognise as 'good' television in 2017 might be determined by the presence of preferred kinaesthetic reading strategies.

In this thesis I have argued that the moving body is central to television drama's storytelling strategies. It is the way in which we are encouraged to read and make sense of television's stories, its characters, and its emotions. It is a key site for the exploration and negotiation of political issues surrounding identity and desire. Its rhythms are crucial to the mechanics and affects of serial storytelling. I have claimed that attending to the kinaesthetic qualities of these programmes is a useful corrective to the traditional aesthetic analyses that are linked to such 'quality' drama series. Rather than presuming that television drama is valuable and engaging because of its appeal to traditional criteria of artistic worth, focusing on how we relate to television through the moving body offers more scope for considering what it is about these dramas that makes them so compelling. For while *The Handmaid's Tale* may be held up as 'better' or 'brilliant' television, such claims would be better grounded in a reflection on how the programme speaks to us, and how it makes us feel – something that is inextricable from its kinaesthetic address.

The Handmaid's Tale articulates its particular mythology and narrative dimensions through the kinaesthetic qualities of the body. The first episode of the season, 'Offred' (1:1), contains three scenes that use particular sets of kinaesthetics to create the world of the Republic of Gilead. Firstly, as Offred, or June (Elizabeth Moss) and Ofglen (Alexis Bledel) walk together to the grocery store, their submissive, subdued pace reflects their particular position within the hierarchies of Gilead. Secondly, Offred participates in the 'Ceremony', in which she provides the fertile womb for the man and wife of her household, lying between the legs of Serena Joy (Yvonne Strahovski) while Waterford

⁵ See Michel Foucault, 'Right of Death and Power over Life', in *The History of Sexuality*, volume one, trans. by Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage Books, 1990 [1977]).

(Joseph Fiennes) rapes her. Finally, she attends a 'Particicution' presided over by the Aunts, in which a man convicted of rape is sentenced to death at the hands of the handmaids. The women file into the grounds of the park and form an orderly circle around the man, and are then free to enact whatever violence they wish upon him during a short time period. Each of these sequences uses particular sets of kinaesthetics – the gait of submission, the cold power dynamics of rape, and the brutality of violence – in order to express the fact that this narrative is set in a dystopian world that differs from our present day one (if arguably, only to a narrow degree). In this sense, *The Handmaid's Tale* echoes the vast narratives I explored in my second chapter, which similarly use particular sets of kinaesthetics as a way to create and cohere a complex narrative universe. Like *Lost* and *Game of Thrones*, *The Handmaid's Tale* invests much of its storytelling and affective impact in the performative qualities of the moving body; it tells a story that encompasses multiple locations (Canada, the US and Mexico) to evoke a sense of geographical extensiveness; and it uses explicitly embodied immersive advertising practices in order to encourage audiences to read these programmes through the body. *The Handmaid's Tale* thus reflects the ways in which the vast narrative uses kinaesthetic reading strategies as a means of making an elaborate and extensive narrative universe coherent.

Yet of course, the meanings and impact of kinaesthesia in *The Handmaid's Tale* are entirely bound up with questions of gender and desire, questions that I explored in my third chapter. We recognise the Republic of Gilead as a dystopian future precisely through the ways in which its sets of ritualised kinaesthetics play off against our ideals of gendered embodiment. I have already considered how the gait and posture of the handmaids serves to reiterate a highly conservative ideal of normative femininity as obedient and restrained. The transformation of what we recognise as modern twenty-first century feminine embodiment into that of the handmaids is thus a kinaesthetic transformation. The various flashback scenes throughout the season emphasise this point. In a flashback scene in 'Late' (1:3), Moria (Samira Wiley) and June enter a coffee shop after jogging together through the park. The two women walk inside with relaxed,

loose limbs, supple and lively with the endorphin rush of exercise. June's card is declined and the male barista snarls 'fucking sluts, get the fuck out of here'. The extroverted kinaesthetics of exercise – in which the body takes up more space and moves with more force and projection – are the catalyst for evoking the encroaching misogynist fascism of the Republic of Gilead. Here, kinaesthesia functions as something of a litmus test for particular political ideologies, the pivot point around which a society organises its ideas of normative bodies. This echoes my contention in my third chapter that kinaesthesia is crucial to how we understand, recognise, and challenge ideas of gendered embodiment, particularly in terms of embodied transformation. Later in the episode, another flashback depicts Moira and June's experience at a protest that turns violent. As the women flee from the open fire of the police, we see close-up shots of their clasped hands as they tightly grip one another for support. These shots echo the tightly clasped hands of Serena Joy and Offred during the ceremony scenes. The affective disjunction between these gestures – care and support versus power and anger – again demonstrates how the Republic of Gilead maintains its hold over the population through policing both how bodies move, and the affective registers with which they move with one another.

Such kinaesthetic transformations are also key to the impact of the ceremony sequences, which again employ strange sets of kinaesthetics in order to construct and critique ideas of gender and desire. In 'Offred' (1:1), we see part of the ceremony from Offred's point of view, looking down from her position flat on her back towards her open legs, where the Commander thrusts into her again and again. The proxemic politics at work in this scene – the women sit or lie down in close contact with one another, but the Commander stands and does not touch either of them with his hands – establish the gendered power dynamics between the characters, in terms of who has agency to act, and who is acted upon. The camera lingers on close-up shots of Offred's face, the Commander's hands (placed carefully on his hips), and Serena Joy's hands clasping Offred's wrists, all marked by a slow, steady lurching. The horror of the rape scene is thus communicated through kinaesthesia, or how the women's bodies move jerkily back and

forth according to the movements of the Commander's hips. The rhythmic pulsations of their three bodies moving in tandem turns the passion of sex into a coldly violent infliction of puritan values and tyranny, and the close up shots encourage us to feel Offred's shame and rage, Serena Joy's irritation, and the Commander's control. In my third chapter I considered the kinaesthetics of rape in relation to *Outlander*; in *The Handmaid's Tale*, rape again becomes a way of constructing a normatively gendered bodies and progressing the narrative onwards, and is again crucial to how the programme uses kinaesthetic readings for particular affective power.

The ceremony scenes in *The Handmaid's Tale* also revolve around the power of kinaesthetic empathy, which I explored in depth in chapter four. The kinaesthetic relationship between the three characters is what gives the ritual its symbolic power: Offred is reduced to simply the proxy womb of Serena Joy, held captive between man and wife. Yet their shared participation in the movement of sex is what transforms (or at least, is intended to transform) the act into one *between* Serena Joy and Waterford. A similar kinaesthetic ritual occurs when the handmaids give birth to the children conceived during the ceremony. While the handmaid labours in a separate part of the house, the wife enacts the process of labour, surrounded by her fellow wives, who encourage and calm her as if she were truly in pain. At the moment of birth, the wife is rushed to the handmaid's room, where she sits behind her on the bed, once more placing the handmaid between her open legs. Much like my case studies in chapter four, *Hannibal* and *Sense8*, the idea behind these sequences is that sharing the kinaesthetics of another person is a way to gain access to that person's experience. In this case, this is less a question of compassionate sharing than an appropriation or a claiming of the power of movement. But again, as I argued in chapter four, the kinaesthetic reading strategies of these programmes seem to encourage a narrativisation of the processes of kinaesthetic empathy. And again, such kinaesthetic empathy – or the ways in which bodies relate to one another through patterns of movement – holds the key to the imagination and construction of particular futures, whether *Sense8*'s utopia or *The Handmaid's Tale*'s

dystopia. Of course, *The Handmaid's Tale* may not appear to believe in the possibility of true kinaesthetic empathy – the ceremony sequences are horrifying, empty and an exercise of power rather than of compassionate sharing. Yet the series continues to ask us to read these scenes *through* the potential for kinaesthetic empathy: we feel the horrors of Gilead's dystopian tyranny through the way it forecloses the possibility of true empathetic connections between bodies.

Throughout this thesis I have argued that kinaesthesia has something to tell us not just about these particular drama series, but also about the medium of television itself. I have sought to ground my discussion of the particular kinaesthetics of these series – kinaesthetics that often involve spectacular athleticism, explicit sex, and extreme violence – within the qualities traditionally associated with television, such as the ordinary, the intimate, the familiar, the everyday. Although *The Handmaid's Tale* aims to present strange sets of kinaesthetics in order to evoke an unsettling future, it also derives much affective impact through small moments of very ordinary kinaesthesia. In 'Late' (1.3), Waterford invites Offred to his study and they play a game of Scrabble together. The game becomes another kind of kinaesthetic ritual: the camera focuses on the small movements of fingers picking and placing tiles in turn. Rather than violent examples of state control and vicious ideology, the ritual here is comforting and domestic. Here, we are explicitly invited to read the scene through the kinaesthetic familiarity of the gestures involved in board games, or what I termed relatable kinaesthetics in my second chapter. The quiet intimacy of these movements is key to how unsettling, strange, and even darkly humorous the scene feels, for their familiarity and intimacy fit strangely within the oppressive surveillance state of Gilead. Kinaesthetic reading strategies, then, operate across both spectacular and striking corporeal set pieces *and* the small intimate moments of the everyday.

There are other elements of the ways in which *The Handmaid's Tale* exploits embodied modes of address and kinaesthetic reading strategies that are noteworthy of analysis. One is how it pairs body movement with music, often to disconcerting effects. At

the end of 'Late' (1:3), following the previous night's Scrabble game with the Commander, Offred walks triumphantly down the staircase of the house in slow-motion, while Simple Minds' 'Don't You Forget About Me' plays on the soundtrack. As she reaches the front gate and realises that her friend Ofglen has been replaced by a different handmaid, the soundtrack abruptly cuts out, and she returns to her submissive posture and pace. The scene exploits our familiarity with the relationship between the moving body and music on screen, in which action sequences are frequently shot and edited to emphasise the matches between the rhythms of body movement and the tempo of music. The strangeness of this sequence, and the discomfiting suddenness with which it ends, serves to remind us of the highly policed kinaesthetic regime of Gilead, in which women cannot access the simple pleasure of moving in time to the rhythms of their choosing. In my second chapter I considered how dance theory might help us understand the performative power of kinaesthesia. Dance is, of course, a form of movement that is paired with music. Indeed, many of the scenes I have focused on throughout this thesis use music in powerful ways: Sia's 'Chandelier' during Maura's moment of self-affirmation in *Transparent*; Jetta's cover of Ten Years After's 'I'd Love to Change the World' during the *Sense8* group sex sequence; or the sweeping strings of Michael Giacchino's original score for *Lost*. The question of how music works to encourage kinaesthetic reading strategies, particularly in terms of the ordinary, everyday relationships we form between our bodies, our broadcast media, and music, is one that would benefit from further exploration.

Another unanswered question in both this thesis and *The Handmaid's Tale* is the issue of able-bodiedness. Handmaids who disobey orders are punished with physical mutilation – fingers and hands are severed, eyes are plucked out, and Ofglen suffers forced genital mutilation as a punishment for establishing a sexual relationship with a Martha. At a reception hosted for the Mexican ambassador in 'A Woman's Place' (1:6), Serena Joy instructs Aunt Lydia (Ann Dowd) to remove the 'damaged' handmaids, telling her that 'you don't put the bruised apples at the top of the pile.' This sentiment seems to be shared by television dramas, particularly the longform serial dramas with which I am

concerned. The body in these programmes is almost always lithe and athletic, fit and beautiful, and unquestionably able-bodied. I do not believe that normatively able-bodied movement is the only movement worth talking about, although I am aware that this has been my focus throughout this thesis. There are interesting questions concerning the abled norms of kinaesthesia throughout my corpus: both *Lost* and *Game of Thrones* use paraplegic characters (Locke [Terry O'Quinn] and Bran [Isaac Hempstead Wright] respectively) to explore questions of agency and destiny; *Outlander* uses the disability of male characters (Colum MacKenzie [Gary Lewis] and Ian Murray [Steven Cree]) in order to highlight both Claire's nursing ability and the kinaesthetic norms of particular temporal periods; and *Hannibal* communicates questions of neurodivergence through different patterns of embodiment, from *Hannibal's* smooth (psychopathic) polish to Will's anxious hesitance and shivering. This is a topic that would be productively explored across broader genres of programming.

While I strongly believe that kinaesthesia and kinaesthetic readings have something to offer all television scholars, I have argued that they have particular relevance to longform serial narratives. I have suggested that the rhythms of seriality – an ongoing progression marked by interruption – might align with particular embodied qualities of movement, and hence might be best expressed and explored through such movements. The fact that these dramas so often use the moving body as the focal point of cliffhangers specifically, and a way of imagining and constructing potential futures more generally, suggests that kinaesthetic reading strategies might work best as part of a *serialised* kind of storytelling. While Margaret Atwood's novel was a relatively slim and self-contained volume, Hulu has announced that there will be a second season of *The Handmaid's Tale*. The season ends with Offred being taken away in a black van to an unknown destination in 'Night' (1:10). 'And so I step up,' she says, 'into the darkness within—or else the light.' The season thus leaves Offred's body *in motion*, in the perpetual process of taking that step, of embarking on that unknown journey. Offred's story thus

demands to be told, to be read, and to be felt as ever-unfolding embodied movement, defined by the kinaesthetics of serial television.

‘Whether this is my end or a new beginning I have no way of knowing,’ Offred remarks, when she enters the van in the final shot of the season. Like serial storytelling, the moving body is also never quite an end and never just a beginning – movement always unfolds, and is always on the verge of becoming something else. This is why, perhaps, it has such power in opening out the massive worlds of the vast narrative, pushing against the normative structures of gender and desire, and imagining how bodies might come to form connections with one another. As television continues to change, and we continue to search for ways to describe it, it is my hope that attending to the qualities of the moving body might provide not an end in itself, but simply a better beginning.

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‘Do No Harm’, directed by Stephen Williams, written by Janet Tamaro (season one, episode twenty, 2005).

‘The End’, directed by Jack Bender, written by Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse (season six, episodes seventeen and eighteen, 2010).

‘Exodus Part One’, directed by Jack Bender, written by Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse (season one, episode twenty-three, 2005).

‘Exodus Part Three’, directed by Jack Bender, written by Damon Lindelof and Carlton Cuse (season one, episode twenty-five, 2005).

‘Man of Science, Man of Faith’, directed by Jack Bender, written by Damon Lindelof (season two, episode one, 2005).

‘Numbers’, directed by Daniel Attias, written by Brent Fletcher and David Fury (season one, episode eighteen, 2005).

‘Orientation’, directed by Jack Bender, written by Javier Grillo-Maruach and Craig Wright (season two, episode three, 2005).

‘Pilot (Part 1)’, directed by J.J. Abrams, written by J.J. Abrams and Damon Lindelof (season one, episode one, 2004).

‘Walkabout’, directed by Jack Bender, written by David Fury (season one, episode four, 2004).

Mad Men, created by Matthew Weiner (USA: AMC 2007-2015).

Magnum PI, created by Donald P. Bellisario and Glen A. Larson (USA: CBS, 1980-1988).

Marco Polo, created by John Fusco (USA: Netflix, 2014–).

Master of None, created by Aziz Ansari and Alan Yang (USA: Netflix, 2015–).

Nip/Tuck, created by Ryan Murphy (USA: FX, 2003-2010).

The OA, created by Brit Marling and Zal Batmanglij (USA: Netflix 2016–).

‘Invisible Self’, directed by Zal Batmanglij, written by Brit Marling and Zal Batmanglij (season one, episode eight, 2016).

Once Upon a Time, created by Edward Kitsis and Adam Horowitz (USA: ABC, 2011–).

One Mississippi, created by Tig Notaro (USA: Amazon, 2016–).

The Oprah Winfrey Show, created by Oprah Winfrey (USA: ABC, 1986-2001).

Orphan Black, created by Graeme Manson and John Fawcett (USA: BBC America, 2013-2017).

Outlander, created by Ronald D. Moore (USA/UK: Starz, 2014–).

‘Both Sides Now’, directed by Anna Foerster, written by Ronald D. Moore (season one, episode eight, 2014).

‘Castle Leoch’, directed by John Dahl, written by Ronald D. Moore (season one, episode two, 2014).

‘The Devil’s Mark’, directed by Mike Barker, written by Toni Graphia (season one, episode eleven, 2015).

‘Faith’, directed by Metin Hüseyin, written by Tonia Graphia (season two, episode seven, 2016).

‘Lallybroch’, directed by Mike Barker, written by Anne Kenney (season one, episode twelve, 2015).

‘Sassenach’, directed by John Dahl, written by Ronald D. Moore (season one, episode one, 2014).

‘To Ransom a Man’s Soul’, directed by Anna Foerster, written by Ira Steven Behr and Ronald D. Moore (season one, episode sixteen, 2015).

‘The Way Out’, directed by Brian Kelly, written by Anne Kenney (season one, episode three, 2014).

Parks and Recreation, created by Greg Daniels and Michael Schur (USA: NBC, 2009-2015).

Please Like Me, created by Josh Thomas (Australia: ABC, 2013–).

Pushing Daisies, created by Bryan Fuller (USA: ABC, 2007-2009).

Queen Sugar, created by Ava DuVernay (USA: Oprah Winfrey Network, 2016–).

Revolution, created by Eric Kripke (USA: NBC, 2012-2014).

Scandal, created by Shonda Rhimes (USA: ABC, 2012–).

Scrubs, created by Bill Lawrence (USA: NBC, 2001-2008; ABC, 2009-2010).

Sense8, created by The Wachowskis and J. Michael Straczynski (USA: Netflix, 2015-2017).

‘Art is Like Religion’, directed by James McTeigue, written by The Wachowskis and J. Michael Straczynski (season one, episode five, 2015).

‘Demons’, directed by The Wachowskis, written by The Wachowskis and J. Michael Straczynski (season one, episode six, 2015).

‘Happy Fucking New Year’, directed by Lana Wachowski, written by Lana Wachowski and J. Michael Straczynski (season two, episode one, 2016).

‘I Am Also A We’, directed by The Wachowskis, written by The Wachowskis and J. Michael Straczynski (season one, episode two, 2015).

‘I Can’t Leave Her’, directed by The Wachowskis, written by The Wachowskis and J. Michael Straczynski (season one, episode twelve, 2015).

‘Smart Money is on the Skinny Bitch’, directed by The Wachowskis, written by The Wachowskis and J. Michael Straczynski (season one, episode three, 2015).

‘We Will All Be Judged by the Courage of Our Hearts’, directed by Dan Glass, written by The Wachowskis and J. Michael Straczynski (season one, episode eight, 2015).

‘What is Human?’, directed by The Wachowskis, written by The Wachowskis and J. Michael Straczynski (season one, episode ten, 2015).

Sex and the City, created by Darren Star (USA: HBO, 1998-2004).

Sherlock, created by Mark Gatiss and Steven Moffat (UK: BBC One, 2010–).

The Sopranos, created by David Chase (USA: HBO, 1999-2007).

Sons of Anarchy, created by Kurt Sutter (USA: FX, 2008-2014).

Star Trek: Deep Space Nine, created by Rick Berman and Michael Piller (USA: CBS, 1993-1999).

Star Trek: The Original Series, created by Gene Roddenberry (USA: NBC, 1966-1969).

Steven Universe, created by Rebecca Sugar (USA: Cartoon Network, 2013–).

Talking Dead, created by Russell Norman and Mike Corey (USA: AMC 2011–).

Terra Nova, created by Kelly Marcel and Craig Silverstein (USA: Fox 2010).

The Thick of It, created by Armando Iannucci (UK: BBC Four, 2005-2007; BBC Two, 2009-2012).

This is Me, created by Zackary Drucker and Rhys Ernst (USA: Amazon, 2015).

‘And My Sisters’, directed by Rhys Ernst (season one, episode five, 2015).

‘Closets’, directed by Rhys Ernst (season one, episode one, 2015).

‘From the Bathroom’, directed by Rhys Ernst (season one, episode three, 2015).

‘Generations’, directed by Rhys Ernst (season one, episode two, 2015).

‘Right This Way’, directed by Rhys Ernst (season one, episode four, 2015).

Top of the Lake, created by Jane Campion and Gerard Lee (Australia/New Zealand/UK: Sundance TV/BBC Two 2013–).

Transparent, created by Jill Soloway (USA: Amazon 2014–).

‘Best New Girl’, directed by Jill Soloway, written by Bridget Bedard (season one, episode eight, 2014).

‘Eliza’, directed by Jill Soloway, written by Ethan Kuperbeg (season three, episode one, 2016).

‘Exciting and New’, directed by Marta Cunningham, written by Faith and Jill Soloway (season three, episode ten, 2016).

‘Flicky Flicky Thump Thump’, directed by Jill Soloway, written by Micah Fitzerman-Blue and Noah Harpster (season two, episode two, 2015).

‘If I Were a Bell’, directed by Andrea Arnold, written by Our Lady J (season three, episode eight, 2016).

‘Kina Hora’, directed by Jill Soloway, written by Jill Soloway (season two, episode two, 2015).

‘Man on the Land’, directed by Jill Soloway, written by Ali Liebegott (season two, episode two, 2015).

‘Moppa’, directed by Nisha Ganatra, written by Micah Fitzerman-Blue and Noah Harpster (season one, episode four, 2014).

‘Rollin’, directed by Jill Soloway, written by Bridget Bedard (season one, episode three, 2014).

‘Symbolic Exemplar’, directed by Jill Soloway, written by Faith Soloway (season one, episode seven, 2014).

‘To Sardines and Back’, directed by Jill Soloway, written by Faith and Jill Soloway (season three, episode three, 2016).

True Detective, created by Nic Pizzolatto (USA: HBO 2014–).

Twin Peaks, created by Mark Frost and David Lynch (USA: ABC, 1990-1991; Showtime, 2017).

Two Broke Girls, created by Whitney Cummings and Michael Patrick King (USA: CBS, 2011-2017).

Ugly Betty, created by Silvio Horta (USA: ABC, 2006-2010).

Unbreakable Kimmy Schmidt, created by Tina Fey and Robert Carlock (USA: Netflix, 2015–).

Under the Dome, created by Brian K. Vaughan (USA: CBS 2013-2015).

Veep, created by Armando Iannucci (USA: HBO, 2012–).

Veronica Mars, created by Rob Thomas (USA: UPN 2004-2006; The CW 2006-2007).

The View, created by Barbara Walters and Bill Geddie (USA: ABC, 1997–).

The Walking Dead, created by Frank Darabont (USA: AMC 2010–).

The West Wing, created by Aaron Sorkin (USA: NBC 1999–2006).

The Wire, created by David Simon (USA: HBO, 2002–2008).

Wonderfalls, created by Bryan Fuller (USA: Fox, 2004).

The X-Files, created by Chris Carter (USA: Fox, 1993–2002; 2016–).

The Young Pope, created by Paolo Sorrentino (Italy/Spain/France: Sky Atlantic/HBO/Canal+, 2016–).

Z: The Beginning of Everything, created by Dawn Prestwich and Nicole Yorkin (USA: Amazon, 2017–).

OTHER MEDIA

Assassin's Creed, created by Ubisoft (France: Ubisoft, 2007–2016).

Dragon Age, created by BioWare (Canada: Electronic Arts, 2009–).

The Lizzie Bennett Diaries, created by Hank Green and Bernie Su (USA: YouTube, 2012–2013).

Mass Effect, created by BioWare (Canada: Microsoft/Electronic Arts, 2007–2017).